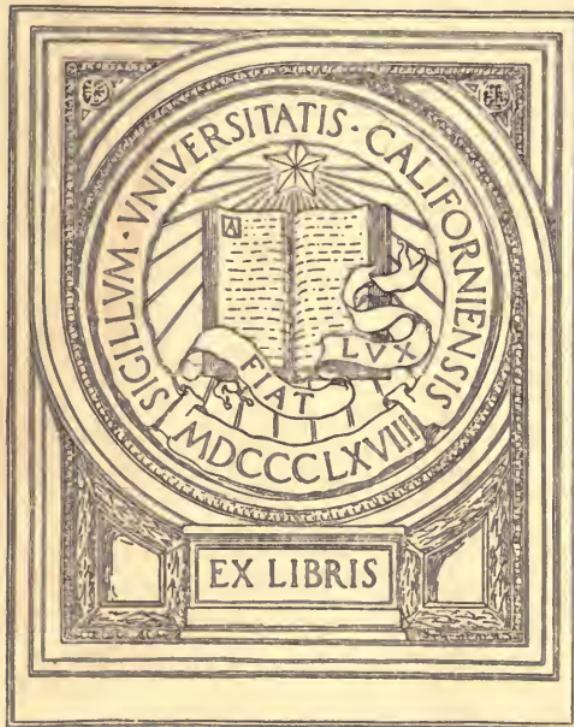
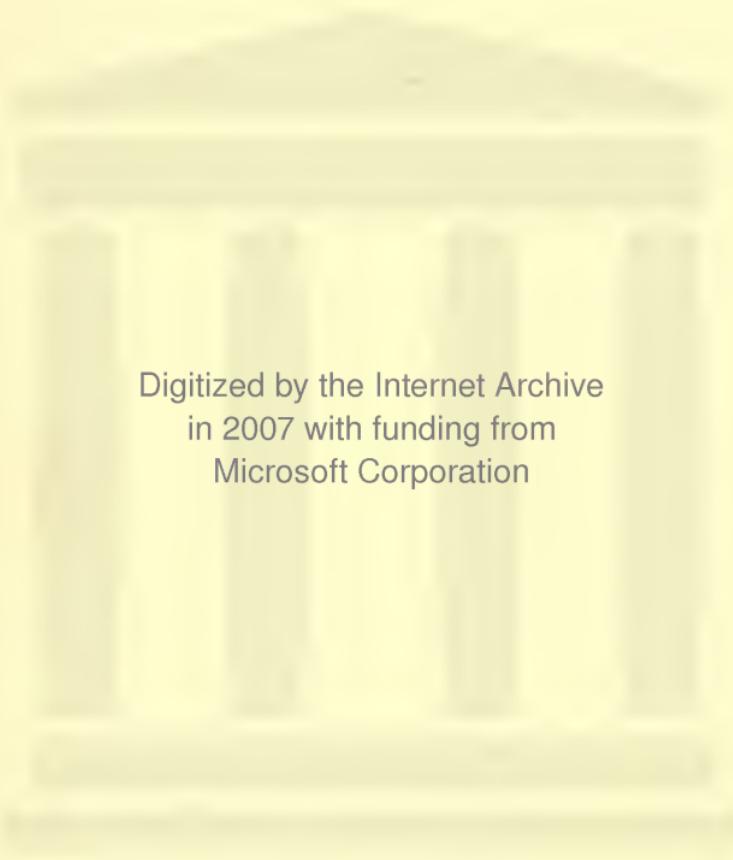


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GIFT OF
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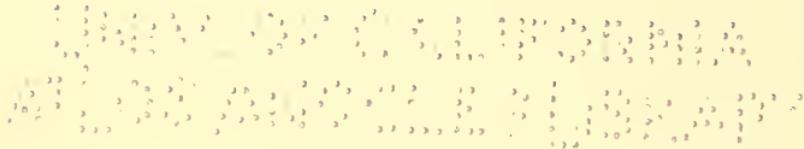
THE SPORTING LIFE

THE SPORTING LIFE AND OTHER TRIFLES

BY
ROBERT LYND



“The little victims play”
GRAY.



NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1922

**THE
ADVENTURES OF
WILLIAM
WATERHOUSE AND HIS FRIENDS.**

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TO
PAUL HENRY

MY DEAR PAUL,

May I dedicate *The Sporting Life* to you,
not because you catch an occasional fish in the
intervals of painting, but because of the amusing
days, when we lived together in the same studio
and owed money to the same milkman?

Yours,

June, 1922

ROBERT LYND.

Gift of Dr. E. C. Malone

193908

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE GRAND NATIONAL: THE DAY BEFORE AND THE LIVERPOOL CUP	11
II. THE GRAND NATIONAL: BACKING THE WINNER	18
III. THE LOVE OF MONEY	27
IV. SEEING THE BOAT RACE	35
V. WHAT A NIGHT'S BOXING IS LIKE	42
VI. TEST MATCHES: GREGORY'S ATTACK AT TRENT BRIDGE	50
VII. TEST MATCHES: THE CROWD "BARRACKS"	59
VIII. TEST MATCHES: DISGRACEFUL SCENES AT LORD'S	66
IX. TEST MATCHES: WOOLLEY THE HERO	78
X. TEST MATCHES: TENNYSON'S CAPTAINCY AT LEEDS	85
XI. TEST MATCHES: BROWN'S AMUSING INNINGS	95
XII. TEST MATCHES: AUSTRALIA WINS THE RUBBER	103
XIII. TEST MATCHES: A ROW AT THE OVAL . .	111
XIV. TEST MATCHES: MEAD SCORES 182 NOT OUT	121
XV. TEST MATCHES: MERELY PLAYERS	127
XVI. SPORT	132
XVII. BUS TICKETS	140

CONTENTS

	PAGE
XVIII. I AM TAKEN FOR A PICKPOCKET	144
XIX. THE NEW HALF-CROWN	148
XX. MY HAT	151
XXI. EATING	155
XXII. ON WEARING A COLLAR	159
XXIII. ON BEING SHY	163
XXIV. A SMALL BOY'S APPETITE	167
XXV. HAMPSTEADOPHOBIA	171
XXVI. RETURNING FROM A HOLIDAY	174
XXVII. JOAN BUBBLE MAKES HER FORTUNE	177
XXVIII. TWO TRAVELLERS WERE TALKING	181
XXIX. HOW MANY WINDOWS HAS YOUR HOUSE ?	184
XXX. ON PICTURE POSTCARDS	187
XXXI. A GREAT CRICKETER—AND ME	191
XXXII. THE MONEY-LENDER	195
XXXIII. THE CHEMIST	198
XXXIV. SITTING UP FOR THE NEW YEAR	202
XXXV. A DEFENCE OF NONSENSE	205
XXXVI. A MEDITATION ON MILK	208
XXXVII. CHILD'S TALK	211
XXXVIII. WHY PAY TAXES ?	215
XXXIX. OLD CLOTHES	219
XL. THE MASTER	223
XLI. BATHS	227
XLII. THE NAMES OF HORSES	231
XLIII. CAPTAIN CUTTLE WINS THE DERBY	234
XLIV. ROYAL HUNT CUP DAY AT ASCOT	243

I

THE GRAND NATIONAL

THE DAY BEFORE AND THE LIVERPOOL CUP

IT was distressing to be given boiled cod for lunch on the train from London, especially at a time when Dover soles could be bought for a shilling a pound even from a fishmonger. But otherwise the eve of the Grand National passed pleasantly enough.

Liverpool is crowded, but in that it hardly differs from any other city. The difference is that Liverpool is crowded to its last hotel—nay, to its last saloon bar—with the nomadic population called the racing crowd. It is a crowd that deserves the respect of every journalist, because it never tires of buying newspapers. It buys even the editions in which there is nothing to read—gathers on the pavements, indeed, to wait for a new edition as for an event of the day.

Liverpool is also distinguished from other cities by making two-thirds of a mile for a shilling the unit of payment in taxis, with an extra threepence for every additional sixth of a mile. The fare would be exceedingly difficult to work out for anybody but a higher mathematician, were it not for the taximeter.

THE SPORTING LIFE

The scale of charges has one advantage—it makes the hands of the taximeter go round faster than in any other city. It was a pleasure to sit in the taxi and watch them on the otherwise dull road that leads out to Aintree. I reckoned, later in the day, that it was also a good deal cheaper than backing West Countryman for the Liverpool Cup.

The Aintree course is a charming oval, intersected with green ways between white railings. It is more or less entirely surrounded by railway trains, the smoke of which rose in the mist as from a line of low smouldering volcanoes shunted hither and thither.

It is for the moment a parliament of book-makers. It was pleasant to see them working as hard as ever—hard enough, indeed, to have satisfied even so exacting a moralist as Samuel Smiles. Standing on their little stools about three inches high, they formed a British square in every ring, each with his badge, his clerk, and his wallet of notes, and each of them roaring like a bull.

Some of them wore horseshoes in their buttonholes with their names printed on them. They wore them, I noticed, the wrong way up. A horseshoe should be worn with the heels pointing upwards—cup-shaped, so to speak—so as not to spill the luck out. Even so, I am forced to admit that the bookmakers looked more prosperous than I do, with my five rusty horseshoes all in the right position above the mantelpiece.

THE GRAND NATIONAL

But if ever there was a body of men who deserved to prosper it is they.

They are respectable, indefatigable, charitable men. They are charitable, not in the niggling fashion of the Charity Organisation Society, but with a gracious fairy-tale and Father-Christmas charity. They are charitable in the old tradition of the saints. They give you money without asking you to work for it.

No employer I ever knew offered me a five-pound note for guessing the name of a horse. Yet that is what every bookmaker, even the humblest of them, does daily. If I guessed West Countryman, the fault cannot be imputed to the bookmakers. They were perfectly willing to pay out if I guessed Grandcourt.

Even harder-working than the bookmakers are the bookmakers' signallers. They are professionally known, I believe, as the tic-tac men.

These admirable men, some of them wearing tight-waisted coats and canary gloves, and with field-glasses slung round their shoulders, take up their positions at various points on the roofs of the stands and in the rings and heliograph the latest prices among the leading bookmakers to every quarter of the field.

Travellers tell us of the miraculous speed with which news is spread in the African jungle. It is nothing to the speed with which news of a change in the betting is spread among the bookmakers on a race-course.

THE SPORTING LIFE

I do not profess to understand the signals. One fat, red-faced man kept covering his nose with his right hand and swinging his left arm up and down like a bellringer.

Another sometimes signalled like a Boy Scout, and sometimes caught the tip of his ear, or his chin, or pressed his nose between two gloved fingers. Others flashed race-cards most of the time. Others again performed grotesque pantomimes, and if you had seen them on the cinema screen you would have said they were threatening to knock down walls or to push people over cliffs.

The whole system is undoubtedly a triumph of organisation. It shows that at least one body of Englishmen has been able to carry on the lessons of the war into times of peace. The same energy applied to the problems of housing or unemployment would have made England a land fit for heroes to do something more than bet in.

There were gleams of sunshine, and between the races, as one moved with the crowd to the paddock behind the stands, one arrived in a little nook of warmth and quiet.

Here one was cut off alike from the voices of the bookmakers and the cold winds. Here within a circle of prying spectators—judges of horseflesh like you and me—the horses, still in their overcoats, paraded on the green grass, ambling as if in a dream. The men and women who watched them whispered to each other as if in a dream, whispered their

THE GRAND NATIONAL

fancies, exchanged the name of Trespasser for the name of Glorioso as the certain winner of the Liverpool Cup.

Speech is nowhere else so gentle as round the paddock of a race-course. If a man knows something about a horse he does not cry it aloud : he murmurs it like a secret with half-shut lips. To move amid such secrets is to move in a world of enchantment. Trespasser, however, is a difficult word to whisper without being overheard.

Nearly everybody was whispering it.

And, indeed, when Trespasser was led out for the parade in front of the stands there was excuse for admiration. He had an air of solid and easy strength that seemed likely to outlast some of the livelier and leaner creatures—West Countryman, for instance—who paced after him in procession.

Grandcourt, restive under his silken and salmon-clad jockey, seemed eager to waste his strength before the race had begun. He flew off up the course for a preliminary gallop with such a bolting ardour that men cried out : “ He’s run away with him ! ”

Horse after horse sprang after him to try the grass, each with a figure from a scrap-book sitting or, rather, standing with its knees about his neck—every horse, I should have said, except West Countryman. West Countryman preferred to prance and back, and behave like a disobedient child, in the neighbourhood of the starting post. There never was a beast I hated so.

THE SPORTING LIFE

The start for the Liverpool Cup was certainly a bad one. The horses hopped about in a cluster, like animals trying to keep their feet on a frozen pond. Trespasser walked round and round the general mêlée in a circle. Then, while they still seemed uncertain what they meant to do, the flag fell, the tape rose to let them pass, the bell rang, and Grandcourt, with his salmon-bloused rider, was off among the leaders.

People did not cry “They’re off!” They cried “What a rotten start!” Some of them I thought were unnecessarily blasphemous about the rottenness of the start.

It may have been a rotten start, but it was not a rotten race. A bookmaker down below was still offering six to one against Glorioso. A man beside me shouted scornfully : “ You may as well say sixty-six to one while you’re at it. He’ll never see it.”

The horses grew dim in the distance beyond the rails in the half mist. Then they turned the corner and, as they crossed the far side of the field, they seemed to fly from one another like shadows. Soon we could distinguish the jockeys’ colours, and people murmured : “ Trespasser wins ! ” “ Glorioso wins ! ” “ No, Grandcourt wins ! ”

As they came towards us, the two leading horses lengthened like running hounds. Each of them bore on, as though the jockey’s will were sending magic through its long frame. It was magic striving against magic. The crowd roared : “ Trespasser ! ”—

THE GRAND NATIONAL

as though to give him that last ounce of fierceness that would enable him to spring beyond the other. But, for every spring Trespasser gave, Grandcourt gave as bold a spring.

They dashed past the stands, each refusing to be conquered. But Grandcourt had conquered, and the crowd slowly emptied itself out of the stands, and through the passages under them, towards the paddock again. Those who had won said: "A grand race." Those who had lost said: "Did you ever see such a rotten start?"

Some of them, as I have said, were unnecessarily blasphemous about the rottenness of the start. I, for my part, if I had wished to be blasphemous, could have said a few things about West Countryman.

II

THE GRAND NATIONAL

BACKING THE WINNER

IT was one of those rainy days on which Liverpool is of a gloomy, nondescript colour—the colour of wet flagstones that shine just enough to show the blurred reflections of the passers-by.

Even so, lines of trams were waiting long before noon to take overcoated holiday-makers out to see the Grand National, and the overcoated holiday-makers were rushing to pack them.

“Just the sort of day,” said one of them, “that it was when Troytown won.”

His friend, a young man of thirty, his features sharp with thoughts about money, denied it.

“It was a hundred times worse,” he declared, “the day Troytown won. I shan’t forget it. I had to lay in bed for six months afterwards.”

This will give you some idea of the strength of character race-going develops in the young. It was a pneumonia day, a pleurisy day, at the very least a chill-on-the-liver day. Yet even those who had had bitter experience of going to race-meetings on such a day in the past were exposing themselves to the

THE GRAND NATIONAL

elements as freely as if they had been conscribed for the purpose.

I found an advertisement in one of the sporting papers that may help to explain their hardihood. "Why work?" ran a tipster's appeal. "By availing yourself of our information you can live in ease and comfort without."

As an alternative to work, racing has undoubted advantages. It is more exhausting than work, but it is not so deadlily monotonous. Even one's salary grows monotonous. The racing man's income is at least never the same for two days running.

On the roadside near the race-course all manner of sellers of pigs' feet, tripe, ginger ale, and oranges were ranged in the rain. Just outside the entrance to the course was a little square filled with groups of men and women listening to tipsters.

Chief of the tipsters was "Old Pizzey"—an aged man in a faded silk hat with rings on his fingers and with, I have no doubt, bells on his toes. He had a banner behind him which declared that he was the "Daddy" of racing knowledge. I understand that, as there was more than one Homer, so there is more than one Pizzey, and that Old Pizzey must not be confused with Mr Mark Pizzey of Ascot.

"Everybody knows Old Pizzey," he assured us. "You can't open a paper, no matter what it is, without seeing my name in it. I'm ninety years old—ninety. Half of you people that are standing round must have seen me here for the last seventy years."

THE SPORTING LIFE

“Good old Pizzey !” shrieked his young assistant, rushing into the middle of the ring of spectators. “Listen !” he screamed, and he really had the most appalling voice, and was red in the face with straining it. “Old Pizzey knows what he’s talking about. Old Pizzey has a reputation. Open any paper—in—the—UNIVERSE, and you’ll find Old Pizzey’s name in it.

“Old Pizzey, he has tipped more winners than Rothschild or Solly Joel ever owned. He’s got a sure thing to-day; ‘e ’as the surest thing in the ’istory of the world. There are tipsters round ’ere,” he said, pointing towards rival rings, “dressed up as jockeys. Old Pizzey don’t need to dress up as a jockey. But he’s as much a jockey as they are.

“There are black men,” he screamed in greater frenzy still, pointing towards a negro rival, “selling tips to-day—savages from South America and the African jungles. Listen ! Old Pizzey’s different.”

“I’m the ‘daddy’ of Turf knowledge,” Old Pizzey agreed, nodding his venerable Henry-Irving head. “A man once asked me,” he murmured, “why I didn’t dress up as a jockey. ‘Go hon,’ I says to him. ‘Wouldn’t I look a bloomin’ fool ?’ ”

“Listen !” his assistant broke out again, his eyes starting out of his head, with evangelistic fervour. “The papers tell you Southampton’s going to win to-day. It has about as much chance of winning as”—he looked round for a symbol of disgusting incompetence—“as that tree.”

THE GRAND NATIONAL

Just then my attention was distracted by a weird and unearthly yell, and, turning round, I saw a tall Negro in a three-cornered hat made out of a newspaper striding up and down in the crowd, out-topping them all.

He uttered what may well have been a jungle war-chant as he walked. He was wearing a scarlet jacket with gold braid, and over this he wore a long overcoat with a fur collar.

Having alarmed us into gazing at him, he began to denounce the newspapers for their ignorance of horses. He laughed at those who had tipped Shaun Spadah ; he jeered at those who had tipped Southampton ; he sneered at almost every horse that anybody else had fancied.

The Negro himself apparently knew more about horses than any sporting journalist. As far as I could gather, he knew at least as much as Old Pizzey. They must both be very rich men, knowing so much as they do about horses.

I passed from tipster to tipster without buying a tip even from the man who looked like a Coalition Member of Parliament, and introduced us to a little chap who, he said, was the brother of Steve Donoghue.

He seemed to know at least as much about horses as either Old Pizzey or the Negro. He, too, I suspect, has a tidy sum put away at the bank.

Inside the turnstiles of the race-course it was dull

THE SPORTING LIFE

enough after the animated addresses and other noises of the tipsters. The rain beat a tattoo on one's hat. Early comers crept into the bars and refreshment tents out of the cold, wet wind. The bookmakers stood in the ring as in a desert, dismal and silent most of them, under umbrellas. A bookmaker's umbrella, it should be said, is something worth calling an umbrella. It is more like the roof of a house than like the umbrellas Christians carry. It is the sort of umbrella you could have a picnic under, but to-day it was no picnic.

Slowly the bookies came to life and began shouting the odds—"Six to one the field," "Seven to one the field," "Eight to one bar one," "Ten to one bar two."

Their cries were still but a mouse's squeak compared to the tumult that would be audible in an hour or so.

They were, however, making enough noise to tempt me to put a small sum of money on a horse called Music Hall. I confess, not knowing very much about horses, I had never heard of Music Hall until forty-eight hours before. I saw in a little book I bought in a railway station; however—it was called by some attractive title, like *Racing Up-to-Date*—that he had once won a four-mile race, which was a race of about the same length as the Grand National. Strangely enough, the column in which this victory was recorded bore what I consider to be the luckiest of all lucky numbers. I also had a

THE GRAND NATIONAL

third reason, but I will not tell it, as I do not wish to appear superstitious. It is enough to say that I spotted the winner as cleverly as if I had been the Negro or Old Pizzey.

I then climbed into a stand and looked out over the misty course, with its pear-shaped enclosure in the centre, packed with buses, charabancs, motors, bookies, and more or less drowned human beings.

Then a doubt assailed me. I went down into the ring again and backed Drifter.

After I had had some lunch the thought insinuated itself into my mind : "Suppose an outsider should win ?" I heard a bookmaker shouting : "Thirty-three to one General Saxham." I was at his ear in two minutes.

"How much General Saxham ?"

"Twenty-five to one," he said.

"You said thirty-three," I reproached him.

"Well, then, thirty-three," he said cheerfully, and after that I felt that I had done enough. . . .

The Grand National is the most beautiful of all races. It is almost worth standing for hours in the rain amid dense terraces of human beings on the concrete roof of the stand to see so beautiful a race.

To see the horses coming out one by one, each ridden by a jockey of the full stature of an ordinary man, and parading before the stands, was to see a prettier spectacle than met the eyes of Noah himself as he stood and watched the animals passing two by two, each after its kind, into the Ark.

THE SPORTING LIFE

Even in the leaden air, their caps, sleeves, and jackets were as rich in colours as a box of paints. It would be feeble to compare them to a rainbow. If you could imagine something with ten times as many colours as a rainbow, cut into little bits of all shapes and sizes, and then given out in odds and ends to be sewn together again into jackets and caps, according to the fantastic tastes of revellers, you will begin to have some small inkling of what the procession of the thirty-three horses that came on parade for the Grand National looked like.

After a gallop to breathe themselves, the horses gradually collected in the neighbourhood of the starting-post. They moved restlessly, a flower-bed of colours, nodding and dancing in the breeze.

Suddenly they bounded forward in a stream. A man with a white flag came and waved them back again.

They got ready again. They streamed out like things thrown in a carnival. A man with a white flag came out once more and waved them energetically back.

Then came the third start, and they were off—off through the white iron gates, and leaping over the first fence, a multitude of tiny waves.

“Here comes the first disaster,” cried someone. Other people cried: “No, they’re all over.”

“No; there’s one down!” “No; two!” “No; three. There are three down!”

Then they passed into the distance and the mist.

THE GRAND NATIONAL

What happened at the Canal Jump and the other perilous jumps I could not tell.

By the time the horses came into sight again the thirty-three starters had dwindled to five.

People said : "Drifter's well ahead," and, indeed, as the horses poured past us again he swept over gorse and water with a grim determination that belied his name.

By some trick of the eye I did not see Music Hall. The crimson jacket on Drifter filled my eyes, but a man near me said : "Music Hall has it!"—and I suddenly knew that I wanted him to win.

Off into the mist again they went, while unseated jockeys could be seen waddling back home along the grass.

Once more the horses were lost to sight on their second round of the course. By the time they came into view again, mere shadows a mile away, the five seemed to have dwindled to two. It was clear that the race had become a duel. Music Hall and Drifter appeared to be winning and losing alternately, and when they sprang over the last jump they were almost neck to neck. Even when the last jump was over, and they were flying along the level green, an ignoramus such as I am could not have been sure which was going to win.

But thousands of men and women were sure. They kept yelling "Music Hall ! Music Hall !" —waving race-cards and hats at him to come on.

And Music Hall came on. Under the white

THE SPORTING LIFE

crescents in the mauve jersey of his rider he swung past the winning post amid the acclamation due to a conqueror—a winner who has made thousands of people his fellow-winners.

Then the rain fell. It didn't pelt ; it simply fell.

After a short conversation with a bookmaker I took my way homeward, quietly pringling with pleasure. I don't think it was the money, though I am fond of money ; it was simply honest pride. I felt extraordinarily wise—like Aristotle, or Plato, or Old Pizzey.

III

THE LOVE OF MONEY

THE love of money is the root of all evil. It makes men fat. It makes men thin. It makes them eat too much. It makes them eat too little. It makes them drink too much. It makes them teetotallers. It makes them marry. It makes them refrain from marrying. It makes them make war. It makes them make peace. It makes them reckless. It makes them mean. It makes them rich. It makes them poor. It makes them politicians. It makes them indifferent to politics. It makes them patriots. It makes them internationalists. It makes them judges. It makes them thieves. It makes them Harley Street specialists. It makes them nervous wrecks. It makes them archbishops. It makes them miserable sinners. It makes them money-lenders. It makes them victims of money-lenders. It makes them bet. It makes them afraid to bet. I might continue the catalogue so as to fill a book. There is almost nothing that men have not done or been for the love of money. But when we have gone through all the counts in the indictment, and weighed their relative importance, we are inevitably brought back to the

THE SPORTING LIFE

first count as the worst count of all. The love of money is to be condemned for nothing more than for this. It makes men fat, and it makes them thin, but especially it makes them fat.

I am sure you would have agreed with me if you had stayed in any of the big Liverpool hotels during the races. There was no smoking-room in which the chairs were not filled by men who were much fatter than they ought to have been. They had straight eyebrows. Their cheeks jutted out under their eyes in ledges of flesh, sometimes yellow and sometimes red. They were of all heights and breadths, but they had not a sunken stomach among them. They wore hats at every tilt except the right tilt. One of them kept altering the tilt of his incessantly as he spoke. When he leaned forward to begin, he would touch it under the brim with the top of his thumb, and it would slide on to the back of his skull. Having got the ear of his audience he would loll back, waving a chewed cigar between two unmistakable fingers, and then, as he made his point, would suddenly seize the hat in the rear and send it rolling nor'-nor'-west over his left brow, as much as to say: "What do you think of that?" He had a gesture of the hat for every stage in the conversation. If anybody interrupted him he would take it off altogether, look at it critically with the cigar wedged in the far corner of his mouth, wipe it with his sleeve, dandle it up and down, and restore it to his head in a flash only when he saw a hole in

THE LOVE OF MONEY

the conversation into which he could plunge, hat and all. Then once more he was all gay. He gave his hat a list to starboard. He tried it over each eye in turn. He boxed the compass with it. When he had said all he wanted to say he leaned back in his chair, holding his cigar as though to let you see that it was a cigar, and by some curious trick his hat seemed to walk up the back of his head of its own volition and to settle down over both his eyes. It was as if he had said : "Wake me up when the others have stopped talking." I had seen something like it on the stage, but this young man with the red, crushed and by no means inconsiderable nose was apparently a real person. He was not yet fat. At least, he was not so fat as his companions. But he will be some day, if he can survive an endless procession of bottled stout.

As for the others, some of them were elderly, some of them were middle-aged, some of them were young, but they were all fat. They called each other "'Arry," "Joey" and "Sam" (pronounced "Sem"). It was inconceivable that one of them should have addressed another as, say, "Robert." The table before them was laden with beer, stout, double Scotches, and glasses of port wine. And, all the time, they talked about money—money they had won, and money they had lost, on horses. "Sam!" one of them, a big, short-necked man with a grizzled black moustache, would call across the table, interrupting a whispered duologue. "Sam!"

THE SPORTING LIFE

At the third repetition of his name, Sam would look up quickly. "Joey 'ere," the man with the moustache told him, "won't believe me about 'ow you and I backed Old Junk at Newbury that day Pop Goes the Weasel lost the Cup by a 'ead." "It's as true as I'm 'ere," said Sam, nodding vigorously. "D'je 'ear that?" cried the other, turning round on Joey in triumph; "d'je 'ear that?" Then he spread out his hands over the table, and leaned forward to address the entire company. "I was feeling a bit cheap that morning," he began, "and me and Billy Ward were standing in the bar, splitting a bottle of fizz, when 'oo should come in but Sam 'ere. 'Ullo, Sam!' says I. 'Ullo, 'Arry!' says Sam. 'Wot is it?' says I, touching my glass. 'No, wot's yours?' says Sam. 'Look 'ere, Sam,' says I, 'p'raps you think I'm 'avin' a drink. I'm not. This is medicine. Not another drop passes my lips till I see Old Junk romping 'ome in the Cup at twenty to one.' 'Go on,' says Sam, looking at me as if I had gone barmy. 'Go on,' 'e says; 'Old Junk 'as as much chance in a race with Pop Goes the Weasel as you 'ave.' 'Look 'ere, Sam,' I said to him; 'come back to the point. Old Junk's going to win. 'E's going to win. If you've got a better shirt than the one you're wearing, put it on him, and don't say I didn't tell you.' Then Sam began talking about form—you remember, Sam?—and doing all 'e could to prove that Pop Goes the Weasel was an absolute cert. Djoo

THE LOVE OF MONEY

remember wot my answer was, Sam ? ‘To ’ell with form,’ I said to Sam—didn’t I, Sam ?—‘ to ’ell with form. I was dreaming about pineapples all night.’ Sam looked a bit queer at that. ‘ ’Ere,’ ’e said, ‘ I must ’ave a drink. My ’ead feels swimmy.’ ‘Wait a bit,’ I told him ; ‘ wait a bit, Sam, and tell me ’ow pineapples are gen’rally sold.’ ‘In tins,’ says Sam, ‘but either I’m going mad or you are.’ ‘Think again, Sam,’ I said ; ‘ ’ow are pineapples gen’rally sold ? I mean to say, ’ow d’je eat ’em ?’ ‘Ow do I eat ’em ?’ says Sam ; ‘I never do eat ’em ; but I s’pose you eat ’em like anything else—off plates.’ ‘Don’t be silly,’ I said to him, ‘you eat ’em in junks. Pineapple junks—does your missus never bring a tin ’ome for dinner ?’ ‘Oh,’ says Sam, beginning to catch the drift of wot I was saying, ‘that’s wot you’re getting at. I know ’em. But you’re all out, ’Arry. It’s not junks, it’s chunks you’re thinking about.’ ‘Chunks or junks, Sam,’ says I, ‘junks is good enough for me. I don’t know ’ow much there is in dreams, but I never ’ad one like this before, and I know I’m going to ’ave a tenner on Old Junk after dreaming about all them pineapples.’ ‘There’s no sense in it,’ says Sam, shaking ’is ’ead. ‘Look ’ere, Sam,’ I said to ’im ; ‘I’ll tell you wot I’ll do. I’ll back my old pineapples against your sense for an even fiver.’ But Sam wasn’t ’aving any. ‘ ’Arry,’ ’e said, ‘blowed if I ’aven’t a sort of goosey feeling myself that Old Junk’s going to win.’ Well, you remember wot ’appened. . . .” But there is really

THE SPORTING LIFE

no need to continue. It was an exceedingly round-about story; the end of which was that Pop Goes the Weasel "fyled to pop," as 'Arry put it—in other words, failed to get away at the start—and that Old Junk did win a surprising victory, which put hundreds of pounds into the pockets of 'Arry and Sam.

As one watched the faces round the table, one noticed that they all smirked with interest so long as conversation continued. But if there was a pause of silence they became vacuous, dull, bored. Then someone would break the horrid stillness with a question that brought all minds back to reviving thoughts about money : "Ask Joey 'ow much did 'e 'ave on Trespasser yesterday." Joey blew out a long plume of smoke from his lungs. "A fiver." "Wot didja get ?" "Twos." Then from someone else : "I 'eard you dropped fifty quid." "'Oo toldja that ?" "'Arry. It was you, 'Arry, told me Joey 'ad dropped fifty quid on the Liverpool, wasn't it ?" "Me ? I never said such a thing in my life." "Well, 'oo was it, then ? Was it you, Bill ?" "You've been dreaming, Ted, like 'Arry and the pineapples." "Blest if I can think 'oo it was, but it was somebody I was 'aving a drink with last night in this very 'otel." "You must have been 'earing as well as seeing double," Joey interrupted him ; "I 'aven't 'ad fifty quid on a horse since I backed Blue Dun in the Cesarewitch. Blimey, I never felt so sick in my life. You remember, 'Arry ? 'Arry was blind-oh before 'e got on the train, and I

THE LOVE OF MONEY

was nearly as bad. You remember the p'liceman outside Liverpool Street Station, 'Arry? 'Ullo,' he said, when 'e saw 'Arry and me 'olding each other up, 'ullo,' he said, 'wot's the trouble?' 'Arry couldn't 'ardly even 'iccough, but at last 'e made a sound that was more like 'Blue Dun' than it was like anything else. Any'ow, the p'liceman understood wot 'e meant. 'Well,' he said, 'I can 'ardly blame you, gentlemen. I've been 'it myself.' . . ." But this story, too, does not bear telling in full. It ended with the policeman's assisting his fellow-losers into a cab, and with a vow on the part of Joey never to put fifty pounds on a horse again.

All the stories were like this. All were far too long. All were full of masses of insignificant detail. All were about money, about tips, about odds—all except one, told by a Jew with a Glasgow accent, who tried to tell a bawdy story of which he had forgotten the point. As he rambled on, with his eyes twinkling round his nose, with a "D'ye see?" here and a "D'ye see?" there, the rest of the company began to talk in pairs, and you could hear the eternal series of questions going on—"Did you back anything in the last race?" "What did Bruff Bridge start at?" "Did you back it both ways?" "'Ow much did you drop on Arravale?" "Did you do well at Lincoln?"—with their eternally monotonous answers. Meanwhile, the Jew with the Glasgow accent went on cheerfully floundering through his story to one listener, who sat with a

THE SPORTING LIFE

heavy, bored face, nodding at every place where he thought he was meant to see a point. But even he after a time ceased to listen, and turning to the man on his other side said : " You remember that old chap in the train 'oo was talking about Taffytus. I wonder did 'e back him for a place." " Sure to," said the other. The conversation had become vital again. . . . Meanwhile, this most interesting of the stars wheeled on its course round the most interesting of the suns. There was never such another star. Is it any wonder that we sat there, most of us fat, drinking double Scotches and bottled stout, and excited by strange dreams ?

IV

SEEING THE BOAT RACE

"**I**T is estimated," a poet who is good at statistics said to me, "that a million people go to see the boat race. That means one person in seven out of the population of London."

It is certainly a momentous event. For one brief hour every year Oxford ceases to be merely the name of a Circus, and justifies its existence as a seat of learning by stirring our imaginations like a race-horse or a football club. Cambridge no longer depends for its fame on its sausages, but on its undergraduates, and Mr Hartley's smile becomes a more potent advertisement of the benefits of University education than the scholarship of a Verrall or a Sir John Sandys.

Even so, there are people who say of the boat race, as Dr Johnson said of the Giant's Causeway, that it is worth seeing, but not worth going to see. But they go to see it every year all the same. They go to see it in such numbers that on the day of the race it was impossible to squeeze one's way into an Underground train at a station beyond Victoria.

Every door of every carriage was held tight by crushed and nervous-looking persons, making

THE SPORTING LIFE

signals of refusal with their mouths behind the glass to those who wished to enter. In the end, remembering the old adage that it is no use trying to squeeze a quart into a pint pot, I left the station and got into a taxi.

Here, as we approached Hammersmith, there were other impeding crowds. The block of motors began to show signs of standing still, like the Derby Day procession on the Epsom road. My driver made the block doubly bad for a minute or two by insisting on turning back and making, by a more circuitous route, for the Duke's Meadows in Chiswick. Thus I was beaten back from the river twice before I succeeded in reaching it. What is one against a million? The million were wise; they were there first.

It was a grey day of east wind brightened by some tens of thousands of blue rosettes. There were blue ribbons on many of the motors. Numbers of young men wore in their hats or button-holes mascot-dolls with blue hair or blue ballet-skirts. The bird's-eye blue of Cambridge seemed to be more popular with the crowd and the crowd's children than the "deep-and-dark-blue-ocean" blue of Oxford. The drivers of laundry-carts whom one passed on the road with their beribanded whips were supporters of Cambridge to a man.

The Duke's Meadows scarcely live up to their name. Even to call them the Duke's Back Yard would be a compliment. They are a piece of waste

SEEING THE BOAT RACE

land used apparently as a dumping-ground for tarpaulin-covered crates. They have only one beauty: they are on the river. If they have another, it is that they are freely strewn with large stones or lumps of broken concrete. Here the Laestrygonians could have found ammunition enough to sink Ulysses and his men twenty times over.

On Saturday the stones were put to a better use. Everybody who was not too lazy took up the biggest stone he could carry and made it a pedestal on the grassy edge of the river, from which he could see over the heads of the million other people present. Some of these pedestals were wobbly enough, but the crowd was so dense that no man could fall much farther than against his neighbour.

It was a quiet crowd and inclined to be cheerless under the east wind. There were nigger minstrels at other points along the curves of the river—perhaps, even Punch and Judy shows. But here there was no holiday music save the melancholy sing-song of an unseen accordion on the other side of the river—the sing-song of an accordion played by a man who is content merely to make a noise without time or tune. There were also occasional bursts of delighted laughter from across the river as boys and girls attempted to climb a steep bank and fell sliding down the mud.

But nobody appeared to be excited. Everybody knew what was going to happen. Even I knew.

THE SPORTING LIFE

The man with the air of a bookmaker, who walked up and down behind the crowd, crying: "Two to one on Cambridge. I'll take two to one on Cambridge," knew.

Beyond the meadows along the bank was a flagstaff-like affair with a long light blue drum or cylinder hanging near the top on one side. People said that this meant that Cambridge had won the toss. On a platform some yards away stood a man with a telephone at his ear and a megaphone in his hand. It was pleasant to know that, though one would not be able to see more than a few yards of the race, one would be able to follow it from start to finish with the aid of the telephone, the megaphone and the flagstaff. A few minutes later a second cylinder, a dark blue one, was hoisted on the flagstaff, where it hung side by side with the other, like the weights in a grandfather's clock. The prospect of a race between the cylinders—"those blue balloon things," as somebody called them in pointing them out—became almost exciting.

There was a burst of sunshine from a blue dome of sky just before the race started, so that every little grey motor-boat that lay by the edge of the stream was reflected in the lighted surface of the rippled and muddy water, and the vermillion funnel of a steam-launch sent its vermillion ghost deep down into the river. To the east the sky was discoloured with the threat of foul weather, but overhead a lark was singing in the blue and gold.

SEEING THE BOAT RACE

Suddenly there was a sound that might have been either a distant shot or the pop of the cork of a ginger-beer bottle. Someone said : "They're off." The crowd immediately turned its back on the starting-place and gazed expectantly at the blue cylinders. The dark blue cylinder fell for about a yard with a sickening thud. There was a roar of cheering mixed with laughter.

Sometimes the dark blue cylinder would creep an inch, two inches, three inches, upwards, and there would be counter-cries of defiance and hope. At one moment it seemed as if it had actually got level again, but no sooner had the Oxford men on the banks begun to yell than the cylinder once more began to descend, like a man letting himself rapidly down a rope.

Before long it had ceased to be more than an amusing spectacle. The Cambridge drum hung steadily at the top of the pole. The Oxford drum dangled like a guy—up and down, but mostly down. If it crept upwards a lady with Cambridge sympathies would say : "It's going to be a race after all. I'm glad it won't be only a procession."

But the drum would fall a length a minute afterwards and no one above school age could any longer believe that there was the slightest chance that Oxford would win. The crowds became silent ; the sky to the east became duller. All one wished was that the boats would hurry up so that one could have a minute's look at them and go home.

THE SPORTING LIFE

After a considerable wait one could hear the cheer coming up the river. It grew from a husky far-away cry till it became a roar that seemed to be a part of the energy of the straining crews. It was impossible not to feel the infection of the excitement, and people now were standing on their toes, with their hats off, in order to catch the first glimpse of the boats as they swept round the bend in the river.

But it was more exciting to expect than to see them. Cambridge was not only leading : it was resting. The little motor-boats and the larger launch that tore up the river in the rear of the boats seemed perturbed in their haste compared to the white oarsmen who moved with as calm and even a rhythm as the rhymed couplets of Pope.

The calm of the Cambridge men, however, was the calm of men who need do no more. The quiet of the Oxford men was the quiet of men who could do no more.

As they neared the end of the race the Cambridge crew seemed to take it into their heads not only to win, but to win handsomely. The men began to pull with a larger, swifter sweep and to earn the cheers that followed them in a storm along the river.

Then they passed out of sight, and the dark blue drum began falling further down the side of the pole.

A minute or two more, and the rope that held it loosened and let it fall till it could fall no further. Cambridge had won, and little boys were cheering with delight.

SEEING THE BOAT RACE

One sandy-haired boy in spectacles took the other side. "Cambridge number five had no puff left," he declared, "when he was passing us." "Cambridge won, Cambridge won," a four-foot member of the other party jeered at him. "Oxford did their best anyhow," the sandy-haired boy declared stubbornly, "you can't deny that." And he couldn't.

As the motors and taxis made their way back through the side streets the little boys and girls who had been playing on the pavements stood on the kerbs with their pale blue rosettes and cheered them or mocked them according to the mascots or ribbons that decorated them. They would go out into the road to scream: "Good old Cym-breedge! Good old Cymbreedge!" at a motor festooned with light blue ribbons, and when a motor with a dark blue doll would pass they would yell: "Tyke it off! Tyke it off!" till they were red in the face.

Cambridge, it seems, is popular in Chiswick. Some of those little boys and girls must have been quite hoarse as a result of the insults they hurled at the University of Oxford.

V

WHAT A NIGHT'S BOXING IS LIKE

YOU haven't the slightest idea what a great boxing match looks like, now that it takes place in a special sort of light in order that it may be photographed for the picture theatres. The ring under its roof of lamps look partly like a billiard table. It looks still more like the stage just before the ghost in *Hamlet* appears.

You could not imagine a more eerie and lavender light. If it were freezing in Elsinore, and not a mouse stirring, it could scarcely produce a more moonstruck or ghostly atmosphere than the shaded lamps threw down on the little platform in the middle of the Albert Hall when Cook, the Australian, and Carpentier met to decide who was the second-best man on this small and ridiculous planet.

The assembly, I confess, was not worthy of the occasion. I had hoped to find the hall crowded with women with the eyes and the claws of tigers. On the contrary, it was crammed for the most part with all sorts of men, many of them in evening dress, and all of them smoking, as if they were in a music hall.

The evening began—— To tell you the truth, I

WHAT A NIGHT'S BOXING IS LIKE

do not know how it began. I arrived only in time for a contest of ten three-minute rounds between Paul Fritsch, the amateur feather-weight champion of the world, and Tibby Watson, who was described on the programme as "the rugged Australian feather-weight."

Paul bounced round the stage like an india-rubber ball, watching Tibby out of the corner of his eyes. Tibby, whose pale hair fell over his brow like that of a man of the Stone Age, had a special genius for ducking his head just as Paul swung his black glove, like the right word, towards the mortal part of his jaw.

Paul bled Tibby's nose, and, having bled his nose, dipped his glove in the red paint and dappled the stains of it over Tibby's body. Then Tibby bled Paul's nose—or was it his ear? Undismayed, Paul went on dancing about in the ghastly light, and, though Tibby rushed at him and rescued his Stone Age head from blow after blow, Paul in the end was declared to have won on points.

Then came another ten-round contest, between Marcel Nilles, heavy-weight champion of France, and Guardsman Penwill, heavy-weight champion of the Army and Navy. This was more like wrestling than boxing.

It was not long before the Englishman's blood-stained tongue was lolling out of his blood-stained mouth. But, for the most part, the two naked men were swinging to and fro, the head of each bowed on the

THE SPORTING LIFE

other's shoulder, and black fists punching vainly at occiputs, ribs and shoulder-blades, while the referee at minute intervals cried "Break!"—at which they swung loose and hopped round each other like elephantine fleas.

I heard a lady behind me, as the fighters were separated for the hundredth time, saying : "Doesn't boxing always make you think of Tennyson's beautiful line, 'Break, break, break'?" The man beside her was in angry mood. He said: "Why doesn't Penwill stand up to him? There hasn't been a single blow struck yet."

I confess I sympathised with Penwill. He had either to embrace a fellow-creature who was perspiring profusely, or to accept a wild rout of French epigrams on his jaws and between his eyes. He chose the better part.

But all this was not quite real. Nobody worried about it, except the naked men who were fighting and the assistants in sweaters and cricket clothes who waved towels at them and sponged their solar plexuses with water at the end of every round.

The most interesting thing that happened during these early fights was the entrance of Mr Bernard Shaw, the saint of pugilism, with a white beard. Yet nobody noticed him. It seemed to me an extraordinary thing that here was the Albert Hall filled with people, who were paying anything from a guinea to twelve guineas for a seat, and yet, if Mr

WHAT A NIGHT'S BOXING IS LIKE

Shaw and Mr Wells had been meeting in the ring for an argument on the destiny of mankind at the same prices, the hall would have been three-quarters empty.

Suddenly the place became alive. It was as though the tide that had been at an ebb a few minutes before was miraculously at the full. A huge Australian doll, that was like a mixture of a teddy-bear and an opossum and a cassowary in a blaze of coloured ribbons, was hoisted on high at one corner of the ring. White men in sweaters, with kangaroos and emus worked on their chests, started to life near it.

George Cook, the bear, the lion, the Caliban of the ring, sank into a chair beside it.

Every gallery in the hall became a perch of monstrous singing-birds crying : "Coo-oo-ee!" The ring itself was crowded with men in evening dress, men in cricket costume, men in no costume that can be described. One of the men in evening dress appealed to us not to smoke and not to make remarks. Another in evening dress said the same thing in French. We applauded both and went on smoking.

Carpentier then leaped up on the stage in a dark grey dressing-gown. With his fair hair brushed straight back from his brow, he looked like the god Mercury, or a character from Shakespeare. One expected him, as soon as the applause had ceased, to begin in blank verse: "'Tis not alone my

THE SPORTING LIFE

inky cloak, good mother," or something of the kind.

Instead of doing this, he ambled round the stage, while his friends bound his hands in surgical linen, and every now and then he had a draught of water out of a green bottle, after which he went over to the corner of the stage and spat into a bucket.

Meanwhile, another accomplice held a wet compress to the back of his neck to thrill coolness down his spine. Cook, his maroon jacket hanging over one shoulder, shook hands with him.

At a bark from the referee, the ring cleared. White men, buckets and all, dropped into the body of the hall.

Cook came on like a bull. Carpentier faced him like a young Bensonian actor who had fine lines to speak. Cook rushed at him, his mouth slewed up his face, as though he were determined to finish an international war in five minutes.

Carpentier looked indifferent. One thought of Gerald du Maurier suddenly attacked by Billy Merson.

Cook rushed at him, grappled, pounded the sides of his head.

Carpentier looked over Cook's shoulder at the referee in rather a bored way.

The referee cried "Break!"

Cook was deaf to all cries, seeing red, white and blue, and any other colour there was, till the referee

WHAT A NIGHT'S BOXING IS LIKE

seized both fighters by the sweating shoulders and forced himself between them.

At the end of this round the galleries were once more perches of singing-birds, crying "Coo-oo-ee!"

In the second round, too, the rush was Cook's, and a character from Shakespeare, lean, melancholic and auto-psycho-analytic, seemed to be defending himself.

The boots of the fighters, as they dodged each other, squeaked in the intense silence of the hall like the boots of Presbyterian elders.

The referee hopped about like a bear on a gridiron, watching for foul blows, and tore the fighters asunder again and again. Again and again Carpentier seemed to be beaten to the ropes.

But always he looked wearily over Cook's shoulder to the referee, and the referee cried: "Break!"

The third round—well, I was rather bewildered after that. Carpentier seemed suddenly to grow angry, alert, inevitable, He was no longer bored. He crouched. He was feline.

His hair ceased to be smooth. It jumped up and down on his head. And by now Cook was dodging and ducking. The lithe arm was mastering the powerful arm. Art was defeating Nature.

Again and again the fighters became locked, punching at the heart, at the back ribs, at the side of the head, with their black gloves. The referee found it more and more difficult to tear the leonine

THE SPORTING LIFE

Cook from his prey. You felt that Cook was as wild with the passion of the fight as though he were seeing red in a war.

But Carpentier never forgot. He remained collected, self-conscious, proud.

As for the fourth round, the end came too suddenly for a layman to know what had happened. They say that Carpentier was not in form, but to me he seemed to spring at Cook like a cat at a bird.

Suddenly, after a slinging and walloping of the gloves that echoed through the hall, he had Cook falling.

He struck him again as he fell. At least, I suppose that is what happened.

A little man jumped up in the body of the hall and began to count—"One, two, three——" You could not hear the counting for the shouting.

Cook rolled on the ground like a shot lion. Like a wounded lion he attempted to stagger to his feet. He could not stagger in time.

Hardly had the ten been counted when, with the effort of a monster, he once more rose into an erect man. But it was too late.

Sweating, broken, he struck his glove into Carpentier's as a defeated sportsman does.

Some of the crowd began crying: "Foul!"

There were scenes, during which little men in evening dress and little men in white sweaters tried to explain that it was all right.

Carpentier had won.

WHAT A NIGHT'S BOXING IS LIKE

It was a beautiful spectacle, except for some of those who had seen Carpentier before. They said it was a "wash-out," and that Carpentier was not the man he used to be. Others, equally authoritative, declared that never before had he shown himself to be so great an artist.

VI

TEST MATCHES

GREGORY'S ATTACK AT TRENT BRIDGE

THE Trent Bridge ground, where the hundredth Test Match between England and Australia was played, looks like a bungling attempt to make a square of a circle or, alternatively, to make a circle of a square.

It looked utterly dismal on Saturday. Possibly the crowd anticipated defeat, possibly it anticipated rain. It came in overcoats, and looked for that reason more like a football crowd than a cricket crowd.

It may be that straw hats are no longer worn. Certainly nobody but a few eccentrics wore them at Trent Bridge.

Thousands of people were sitting on the grass in front of the stands and the seats as on a spring day. But they sat on waterproofs and newspapers.

They were a quiet crowd—so quiet, even in their conversation, that you could hear a chaffinch singing in the elm that hangs like a green cloud over one of the stands. If any man made a joke to his neighbour a thousand people could hear it in the heavy stillness.

TEST MATCHES

"Ah'm surprised that so oäld a man as you should be so frivolous," was one remark called, hand beside mouth, across the stand to a distant friend. I did not see the "oäld man," and could only guess in what respect he had proved so frivolous, but the remark at least stirred one's mind with the image of a lesser Falstaff of the Midlands, and so helped to keep one from being put to sleep, as one might otherwise have been, by the spectacle of four or five sleepy men slowly pushing a roller, with another sleepy man sitting on it, backwards and forwards on the pitch.

There can be nothing more somnolent than the preliminaries of cricket. One would imagine from the care that is taken of the ground that it was a sick-room, or at least a room being prepared for the reception of invalids. One is surprised that the umpires, when they come out, do not walk on tiptoe.

The creases are kept protected from the least drop of rain by umbrella-like things on wheels. At last these are trundled off the field, looking like retreating insects ; the ropes are removed ; the pitch is measured ; the stumps and the bails fixed by the umpires.

Then at long last, a sight for sleepy eyes, down the pavilion steps comes a waterfall of white figures. It is the Australian eleven coming out to field.

The cricket on Saturday was sensational in so far as it is possible to be sensational without being very

THE SPORTING LIFE

exciting. It was like a humdrum, unadventurous story with some desperately exciting paragraphs.

It was the bowlers and the fielders, not the batsmen, who provided such excitement as there was. They were much too exciting, it seemed, for the batsmen. Gregory and Macdonald are both tall men with an immense swing of arm, who can hurl a ball as though they were bomb-throwing.

When Tyldesley came on to bat, in succession to Knight, on the English side he stood at the wicket merely for a second like an uneasy question-mark, and, when he was bowled first ball by Gregory, he seemed still to be asking bewildered questions. He looked at the sky ; he looked at his legs ; he looked at the wicket. He knew that something queer had happened, but he did not know how it had happened.

Then came Hendren with his famous waddle—the waddle of a man who fears no foe, and who looks as likely to score a century when all is disaster as in the hour of victory.

Gregory walked back twenty yards, turned, ran a few steps, changed his step, leaped on with longer strides, and just as he reached the wicket, with arm swinging and head tilted suddenly north-north-west, let fly one of those deadly balls that might either shoot along the grass like a snake or strike the ground and bound over the wicket, over the wicket-keeper, over the moon.

Hendren watched him doing this, I think, three times. He watched him, like an amazed child

TEST MATCHES

watching fireworks. The third time the ball tore one of his stumps up by the roots and sent it somersaulting over the grass towards the distant wicket-keeper.

It was so catastrophic that it was comic. People had to laugh. Three wickets for 18 runs for an all-England team was a paradox too startling to be treated seriously.

Douglas then took Hendren's place—Douglas, whose initials, J. W. H. T., are said to have been taken to signify "Johnny Won't Hit To-day" during a tour in Australia. But, indeed, Johnnie hit all a man could in the circumstances. He looked a little lazy and stiff as he walked to the wicket, but he immediately began to play with the air of a man who felt that he and not the bowler was master of the situation.

The spectators no longer uttered subdued whistles of awe or drew in their breaths at narrow shave after narrow shave as the terrible bombing of the wickets went on. Douglas, they felt, was bomb-proof. The bombs even glanced gracefully from his bat at times, and there was neither stiffness nor laziness in his figure when there was a chance of stealing a run.

Nor was it one of the bombs that caught him at last. He fell a victim rather to the wiles of the gigantic Armstrong.

Armstrong is a giant of whom it has been said that his thighs are as high as other men's shoulders. Yet, with all his nineteen stone of weight, he is light

THE SPORTING LIFE

enough on his feet. He bowls rather like a fat uncle—not altogether unlike a fat aunt. He comes sailing along towards the wicket, holding the ball over his stomach with both hands as he runs. He did not put all his nineteen stone into the ball, and any nephew would have taken the hardest possible whack at it. Douglas did, and missed, save with the very edge of his bat, and he was caught by Gregory in the slips before he quite realised that Armstrong had bowled like that on purpose.

Holmes, meanwhile, who had been batting from the beginning, was going on scoring while everybody else's wicket was falling. He batted rather like a fencer. A snapshotter could have caught him in many of the attitudes of a fencer on guard.

When Woolley, lean and high-shouldered, came out to join him, there also came a cloud out of a pavilion of clouds, which paused over the ground, and began to empty itself on the grass as one might empty a watering-can.

The cricketers looked at it as if in terror. The batsmen looked at it, the bowlers looked at it, the fielders looked at it, the umpires looked at it. Then, without waiting for the over to be finished, they bolted for the pavilion like one man. It was as if their doctors had warned them that a single drop of rain might prove fatal.

The attendants then hurried out the pent-houses on wheels to protect the crease, and bucketfuls of sawdust for the bowlers when they should return.

TEST MATCHES

The sun was shining for a considerable time before the cricketers would venture out again. At last, the pent-houses were rolled away, and the umpires in their white coats appeared on the empty field, like the priests in some curious Chinese ritual. Hardly, however, had Macdonald begun to bowl when another black cloud came, as if deliberately, and hung over the ground, like a watering-can in the hands of a gardener.

Once more the players were like savages in the presence of an eclipse. A helter-skelter of white limbs, they ran to the pavilion, while the spectators pursued them with taunts about umbrellas and derisive laughter. Ultimately there was no more water left in the cloud, and Armstrong and Douglas ventured out to see if it was all right.

They decided that it was ; and then the two Chinese priests came forth again, and the waterfall of white figures poured down the pavilion steps, followed after a time by the two batsmen, in armour of glove and pad.

But though the rot might be stayed, it could not be stopped. Five wickets were down for 77—six for 78.

Rhodes looked for a time as though he were going to treat the bowling of Gregory and Macdonald like anybody else's bowling ; but, whether it was the pace, or the queer mixture of leaden and golden light, or the condition of the ground, he, too, seemed unable to follow the ball with his eye, and it was

THE SPORTING LIFE

shooting past him and over his head in the most bewildering fashion. After one ball, he took off his cap to look at it. The peak had been shot off by the ball.

Experts, I understand, do not admit that really fast bowling exists nowadays. It may be so. I am content to use some milder adjective about Gregory's bowling—say "Terrific."

Even when the batsmen struck the ball, it seemed all but impossible to get past the fielders. There was not a man in the Australian eleven who could not have caught a flash of lightning in one hand. They were men, as someone said, who always ran where the ball was going even before the batsman had hit it.

There may have been six runs added to the score through the failure of fielders to do the impossible. There were not more.

Rhodes and Jupp were both out with the score a little above a hundred. Nothing remained but the tail. Strudwick stood his ground heroically and made passes with his bat, but at the end of every ball he looked as if he did not know whether he was out or had hit the ball to the boundary. His bewilderment amused the crowd, who laughed and cheered enthusiastically.

His wicket fell, and Richmond came on as last man. He is, they say, popular as a humorist, and, being the only Notts man in the team, he was the local hero of the day. He was cheered on his

TEST MATCHES

entrance as though he had been the shade of W. G. Grace.

He batted more like a schoolboy than like W. G. Grace: He slogged out at Gregory for one glorious second, lifted the ball into the air as the ball (I am afraid) is never lifted in first-class cricket nowadays, and landed it over the boundary for 4.

The crowd cheered again and again—the loudest cheer of the day. Gregory bowled again. Richmond once more hit out as though he had nine lives before him. But Gregory's eye was swifter than the ball, and, rushing forward, he put an end to Richmond's brief spell of glory with the most brilliant catch of the day.

England, with a total of 112, had failed disastrously. "I never dreamt of this," said a man beside me, with a helpless smile. He treated it as something incredibly absurd.

Nor did matters improve when Australia came on to bat. The Australians, unlike the English batsmen, were not men attacked by demons. Collins and Bardsley were unperturbed by the English bowling, which did not seem to be nearly so deadly as the fielding.

Bardsley, lean and left-handed, had an uncanny gift for outwitting even the fielders, and for darting the ball through every chink or opening in the field.

When Macartney joined him, and began to score with the very first ball, most people had a feeling that the Australian score was going to be a huge one, and,

THE SPORTING LIFE

when Macartney was just afterwards given out leg before wicket, the crowd expressed its relief in a loud cheer. It had already been annoyed by the refusal of the umpire to admit that Bardsley was "run out." One man near me yelled hoarsely: "He was run out by four yards!" The exaggeration was so gross that it raised people's spirits again.

On the whole, it was an interesting, boring, amusing, tedious, sensational and dull day's cricket.

VII

TEST MATCHES

THE CROWD "BARRACKS"

THERE were far more people present at Trent Bridge for the second day of the match than on Saturday. The five-shilling crowd did not at first overflow on to the grass as on Saturday, but that was because it was not allowed. The half-crown spectators, however, were sitting on the grass by the thousand, and hundreds sat on the slopes of the roofs.

The Australians were all out by twenty past twelve for about twice the English score.

Gregory was immediately put on to bowl, and Knight was cheered enthusiastically because he scored from the first ball.

Gregory, indeed, turned out to be, not a demon, but a man, in these early overs, though he swung his arms and jerked his shoulders about before bowling as though he were trying to loosen imprisoned forces.

Macdonald seemed to-day to bowl with greater vehemence, and Holmes, as he stood up to him, was constantly disturbed by balls that glanced off his elbow, or wounded him above the knee, or shot up along his bat and down among his shoes.

THE SPORTING LIFE

Macartney was then put on to bowl instead of Gregory, in the hope of gaining by gentleness what could not be got by violence.

Macartney is a small man, who runs slowly up to the wicket, his right hand giving the ball to his left as he runs. He sends the ball up in the easy-going manner of a player at a practice net, on whose play little or nothing depends. He bowls the sort of ball, indeed, that as a boy one dreams of meeting half-way up the pitch and lifting out of the ground for 6.

I do not think, all the same, that a single boundary was hit before luncheon. The Australians at times had to try twice before they were able to stop the ball, but they never failed to stop it. Taylor caught Holmes out at 7, by making a desperate spring at the ball, at the end of which he was rolling over and over with it on the grass, as though he had been playing Rugby football.

The next misfortunes that befell the English eleven were the results not of play but of accident. Gregory came on to bowl once more ; this time at the pavilion end, and hurled himself into the air in his determination to repeat the terror of Saturday.

Unhappily, the ball, as it bounded fiercely from the pitch, caught Tyldesley on the head, so that he fell on the ground, and rolled over in agony, while the ball ran on to his wicket and shook the leg bail on to the grass. He was supported on his way to the pavilion by a doctor, while one of the Australian fielders followed with his bat.

TEST MATCHES

Hendren took the place of the wounded batsman, and provided comic relief as he walked to and fro on the pitch, patting it here and there, and then turning back for another caress just as you thought he was finished and should be getting ready to bat.

Not a blade of grass seemed to escape him. He had the eye of a hen as it picks up odds and ends of things in a farmyard where there is nothing to pick up.

Unhappily there was more prologue than play in his day's work, though he had a pleasant, lively way of stealing hairbreadth runs with Knight. This was in the end Knight's undoing. Knight had blocked a ball, and as it lay a few yards up the pitch, out of reach of any fielder, he and Hendren began to run. They hesitated, with a "Yes—no," began to run, lost their heads, and Knight had to run back to his wicket.

He reached it too late. The ball was there first. Hendren flung his bat on the ground in rage and disgust. He clearly thought it was his fault. Indeed, he is at times inclined, like a fox, to overreach himself.

Knight was a serious loss; not that he was batting superbly, but that he was batting securely.

Meanwhile, the crowd was getting exasperated, partly by the slowness of the scoring and partly by the fierce, bounding onslaught of Gregory. It was evident that they blamed him for Tyldesley's wound.

THE SPORTING LIFE

There were jeers and cheers from a section of the spectators, which in Australia would be described as barracking. A man near me said : "They'll put the bowlers off. No bowlers could stand that!"—and within five minutes of his having spoken Gregory was seen putting on his sweater, with its green and yellow collar-band, and there was a good deal of cheering and chuckling at this sign that he was going to dwindle into a comparatively innocuous fielder again.

Macdonald, and not he, however, was the supreme bowler of the day. His bowling was almost as remarkable as Pellew's fielding. Nothing else, however, could be quite so remarkable as that. Had Pellew as many arms as Briareus, and twenty times as many legs as the figure that symbolises the Isle of Man, he could not have been in more places at once, or a more impassable guardian of the boundary.

When Hendren and Douglas were both clean bowled by Macdonald, it looked as though the second day's play were going to be as disastrous for England as Saturday's. On Saturday England had lost five wickets for 77. To-day she had lost (including Tyldesley) five wickets for 76.

It was when Jupp joined Woolley that what looked like being the great stand of the day took place, and just before tea Woolley had restored cricket to the ancient heroic level by driving a ball of Armstrong's at a star and sending it out over the ropes for 6.

TEST MATCHES

Gregory by this time had resumed bowling, much to the indignation of some of the spectators, who began shouting "No ball!" and other taunts at every ball he bowled. And he certainly bowled them red-hot.

Jupp did his best to dodge—to save his throat, his arms, his thighs. When the time for tea came round Gregory put on his sweater again and the "barrackers" rejoiced, imagining that they had for the second time won a victory. But Gregory was only going off with the others for a cup of tea.

No sooner was he back again, with Jupp doing his best to hit out, than Pellew, as ever, was in the way, and Jupp was caught out and on his way back to the pavilion for what sportsmen call a "praiseworthy 15."

What one especially liked about Woolley was that he was the only batsman on the field in whose hands the bat seemed really to deserve to be called "the willow." It was during the partnership of Woolley and Rhodes that the score mounted to the point at which a defeat by an innings was made impossible.

It was during the same partnership that a tea-room attendant came into the stand looking for lost cups.

"A 'undred cups out," she announced indignantly to the doorkeeper of the stand.

"Why don't you go among the people and sing out?" he asked her.

"Sing out?" she echoed him. "If you speak

THE SPORTING LIFE

to them, they won't answer you. They're not civilised."

She said it with a sniff of such fervour that there was nothing for the barbarians she denounced to do but laugh.

The laugh had hardly died into a smile when Woolley was caught at the wicket for 34, leaving the score at 138 for seven wickets.

Strudwick followed, and a roar of amusement went round when Hendry's very first ball beat his wicket to an angle of 60 degrees.

When Rhodes was caught at the wicket for 10, nothing could have saved England from defeat except an immediate rainstorm that would have lasted a little over twenty-four hours.

People had been saying: "No one's batting better than the old man." But the "old man" was helpless before Macdonald and Hendry. And what could the tail of the team do where the "old man" was helpless? The whole English team was out before a quarter to six, leaving the Australians with as many runs to get to win as you could count on the fingers of a large hand.

"They'll beat any team that England can put in the field," was the general comment. "They're altogether too smart."

Little Macartney struck out masterfully for Australia. Unlike Woolley in most respects, he was like him in this, that his bat seemed to be a part of him.

TEST MATCHES

In a few seconds came the winning "boundary."

And so an amazing match came to an end in two days with a little of the mildest of mild applause, the thronging of the crowd on the field, and the rueful, amused remark, "I want my money back," from people who had paid in advance for three days' cricket. Then the sun shone out more brightly and the people scattered homewards, tired, a little shocked, and voracious for a square meal.

VIII

TEST MATCHES

DISGRACEFUL SCENES AT LORD'S

“**D**ISGRACEFUL scenes at Lord's.” That is the only heading that could do justice to the feelings of thousands of men and women who had bought tickets for the second Test Match, and who were still attempting to blaspheme their way into the ground nearly an hour after play had begun.

It was not the players, or the public, or the police who behaved disgracefully : it was the authorities at Lord's.

They had sold thousands of reserved seats, but had made no arrangements for admitting ticket-holders or for informing them where they could be admitted. They seemed to have kept the secret even from the police, who were as much at sea as anyone else.

I saw one old gentleman, with field-glasses slung round his shoulder, go up to a policeman in the crush and, holding out his ticket, ask : “Where do I get in with this ? ” “Nowhere,” replied the policeman, with the wild smile of a man reduced to desperation. It was very nearly the truth.

TEST MATCHES

I arrived an hour early and was sent to the far end of a queue that appeared to be about a quarter of a mile long. One could amuse oneself by subscribing to a flag-day, or buying from hawkers souvenirs in the shape of a small cricket ball with a photograph of an Australian player let into it, or being deafened by a lean man who came up and whistled close into one's face with one of those distressing inventions that are supposed to imitate the songs of birds, or watching the *Chu Chin Chow* camels parading by, like turkeys that had tried to be born as horses, or listening to the endless chatter of men who explained that Douglas was a fine cricketer, but a bad captain, and who talked of English batsmen generally as though they were a lot of shivering schoolboys waiting to be caned by Mr Squeers.

After about an hour the rumour rippled along the queue that the ground was full except for ticket-holders. This meant the dropping away of some thousands of people.

The queue then advanced more rapidly, till when it was just within sight of the turnstile it was attacked on the flank by a rush and crossfire of persons who had the red tickets of members of Lord's.

To make things worse, a horse-policeman forced his way in and broke the queue up, and it in its turn became a mob. It gathered round the turnstile, while hundreds of people stretched their arms into the air, holding up their tickets, and yelling:

THE SPORTING LIFE

“Ticket-holders ! Where do ticket-holders get in ? ”

It was a patient crowd, but the language was on the strong side. Ladies contented themselves with “What the devils ! ” and “Gracious heavenses ! ” as the sun beat down on their delicate faces. Men thundered in growls, followed by vivid flashes.

Every now and then an elderly gentleman or a lady and her daughter would have to beat a way back out of the crowd in order to escape fainting. In any other country, or among the devotees of any other game, there would have been a riot. A man beside me said viciously : “A football crowd would have had the gates down.”

Meanwhile, people in front were getting in at what seemed to be the rate of about one a minute. A cynical lady said that it was like a rich man trying to get through the eye of a needle. It was evident that they were examining every ticket-holder’s passport and searching him for arms before admitting him.

New-comers would arrive and say to us, politely and hopefully : “Would you mind letting us past ? We’ve got tickets.” There would be a bitter and universal shout of “We’ve all got tickets ! ”

After a time a merry-looking man looked out at us from a window in the back of one of the stands, and, framed in ivy, shouted out : “England 58 for no wickets ! ” It was not true (as we afterwards discovered), but it cheered the crowd up.

TEST MATCHES

Then King George arrived, and the gates opened and shut for him as if by magic.

After that a horse-policeman told us to line up against the wall in a queue. We did so, and sweltered in the sun for a little longer. Then he came and told us to go and form a queue at another gate. “Queueriouser and queueriouser!” a punster in the crowd relieved his feelings by muttering. And even that wasn’t the end of it, for one ultimately had to leave this for yet another queue at right angles to the wall, which crept into the ground between two banks of policemen, feeling somewhat like Swinburne’s “weariest river” that “winds somewhere safe to sea.”

But when once you were inside the ground! Is there a more beautiful view in England, I wonder, than the view you get from one of the stands in Lord’s on a fine day? There is the green and white of the field—as restful as a daisy field in Chaucer. But there is also at Lord’s a noble and multiple idleness that takes the imagination, not to Chaucer, but to the South Seas.

It is a ground that one almost expects to be surrounded by palm-trees, and, surely, if one were on the roof of the pavilion, one ought to have a view of a blue lagoon and a distant reef keeping out the noise and strife of breakers.

Woolley and Douglas were batting for England by the time I arrived in my seat. Armstrong was running up to the wicket, like the world nicely

THE SPORTING LIFE

balanced on two legs, and sending up those enticing balls that one could play so beautifully with a tennis racquet.

Gregory bowled from the other end with the dangerous spring that had at Nottingham been like the wielder of a tomahawk. But the grass did not conspire with him at Lord's as it did at Nottingham. The ball flew fast as ever from his hand, but it did not explode on touching the ground.

At the same time, Gregory displayed the character of a great cricketer. He is the most prehensile of fielders. He gives the impression of being a man who can catch the ball either with his hands or his feet. When the wicket-keeper returns the ball to him he walks impatiently away from it, and the ball finds its way into his hand seemingly by magnetism.

Woolley and Douglas, however, were a match for any bowling that was attempted against them. They could not, perhaps, do what they liked with it, but neither could it do what it liked with them.

Woolley had struck me at Nottingham as being the nearest thing to a great artist in the English team. At Lord's he proved himself to be something even nearer a great artist than at Nottingham. He is a lean man whose image you could make out of the contents of a box of matches : his legs are matches ; his arms are matches on hinges ; his head looks about the size of the head of a match. But he plays with a careful dexterity that is far removed from the stiffness suggested by this image.

TEST MATCHES

He is incapable of Berserk rage in his batting. He ultimately lost his wicket through attempting to imitate it. But it was delightful to watch him as he felt himself more and more the master of the bowling and sent the ball spinning to the boundary in a parabolic curve that even the demon fielders of Australia, running at top speed, could not intersect.

As for Douglas, he, too, seemed to be a careful master, as he stood with his bat moving like a steady pulse, and guarded his wicket against Armstrong's trickery. His hair always shines, but never before did it shine as it shone on Saturday. It shone in the sun like polished metal. It is generally believed to be the most polished hair in the history of English cricket.

Douglas's parting down the middle is as famous as Grace's beard. He is recognisable also by his stiffish walk, as of a man in armour, or a man who, for his height, is a little short between the knee and the ankle. When he wants to steal a run, however, he is like a man who in his excitement forgets that he is wearing armour, and at such times he always beats the field.

Macdonald was tried against him before luncheon. He is the most attractive of the Australian bowlers to watch. Sunburnt to the colour of a Red Indian, he is also lithe as a Red Indian, as he runs toward the wicket, moving the hand that holds the ball sinuously, as a serpent moves its head.

Like a darting serpent, too, is the ball as it shoots

THE SPORTING LIFE

its way along the grass to the far wicket. Deadlier far than Gregory on Saturday, Macdonald would have fascinated any other English batsman but Douglas or Woolley into impotence.

It was a ball from Macdonald, however, that Douglas first drove spinning to the railings. Then, when Mailey came on, with what may be called his Sunday-school bowling, Douglas began to hit out as if cricket were after all not war but a popular amusement.

"When our Johnnie begins to slog," I heard someone say, "he can hit as hard as anybody." "Our Johnny," however, began to try to slog, not only Mailey, but Macdonald. If he had hit that ball of Macdonald's, it would undoubtedly have reached Buckinghamshire. But long before "our Johnnie" had brought back his bat out of the sky his wicket lay in ruins.

After that the match became a Woolley monologue, interrupted by a procession of batsmen out of the pavilion and back to it again. Evans had scored only 4 when there was a click, and a catch behind the wicket, with the Australian team all looking perfectly certain that he was out. The umpire gave him "not out," but it made no difference. Macdonald shot his wicket dead with the next ball.

Tennyson came on and stood at the wicket, squat and bent like a T-square. He had evidently never seen such bowling before. He thought, however, he knew what to do with Mailey. He ran up the

TEST MATCHES

pitch, rejoicing to meet him. But Mailey is not so innocent as he looks. He had lured Tennyson out in order that he might be stumped by Carter before he could look round.

Nor did Haig do any better. His only glory, indeed, was to be missed twice by the mighty Pellew, who tumbled and rolled on the ground after his spring at the ball.

With seven wickets down for 156 the game became almost exciting. Everybody was discussing eagerly whether there was any chance that the tail of the team would last long enough to enable Woolley to score 100.

Parkin came on, attempted to play football rather than cricket with Mailey's bowling, and, after doing this twice, was clean bowled.

Then Strudwick appeared, and stood at the wicket, a bantam, while Carter, another bantam, kept the wicket, behind him, and Mailey, who is a larger bantam, bowled to him. If he was little, however, he could make a big hit, and when he swept the ball twice to leg for 4 the Surrey men in the crowd were as uproariously delighted as if anybody else had scored a century.

There was now nothing left but Durston's six-foot-three and Woolley. They apparently made up their minds that they were as likely to take the score up to 200 by violence as by passive resistance. Woolley, thereupon, set out to prove to Mailey that you should not send up the ball to a really great

THE SPORTING LIFE

batsman as though you were throwing him a lemon. He ran up the pitch to meet him with bat rampant.

Had he been playing golf that would have been a great stroke. But it was an error in cricket. The ball that had missed Woolley's bat did not miss Carter's hand, and Woolley looked round to find himself stumped after scoring 95 runs against the finest fielding on earth. He had with his own bat scored more than half of the English total of 187.

The Australians did not begin their innings till after an early tea, but they at once set to work to show that they could bat as well as they could bowl.

Bardsley and Andrews, in contrast to the English batsmen, batted as though the field were half-empty, and as though there were infinite green spaces over which it was perfectly safe to drive the ball. Andrews, for his part, was mistaken, and; when the score was only 19, he treated Durston's fast bowling a little too optimistically and was caught at the wicket by Strudwick.

But when Bardsley and Macartney got together they did more or less what they liked with the bowling. Douglas rubbed the ball on his forearm before bowling, as if to make it smooth and shiny for its task, but in vain. He rubbed his hands on the grass, as is his way, but equally in vain. The score went up to 56, and neither he nor Durston, long as the Long Man of Wilmington, could get another wicket.

TEST MATCHES

The score would have been considerably smaller if the English team had been able to field like the Australians. The English fielders are not, like the Australians, thought-readers who know what a batsman is going to do with the ball before he does it. One or two of them even seemed unable to hold the ball when it came directly towards them, and spectators cried out more than once in rude impatience : "Get hold of it!"

Macartney's was not the greatest of the Australian innings. But it was the most delightful to watch. Reputed to be the second finest living batsman, he would possibly be the greatest if he were only a few inches taller.

He plays his strokes with the ease with which Nijinsky moves in a ballet. His chief characteristic, indeed, seems to me to be perfect ease rather than perfect grace. It all looked too easy to last, and Durston's speed of ball and Strudwick's speed of eye defeated him in the end as they had defeated Andrews.

The Australian batsmen did not begin to think twice about what to do with the bowling until Haig and Woolley were bowling together. Woolley is one of the puzzle bowlers. He is a bowler with an unusual action. He first walks a yard, then breaks into a run for a step or two, then stops almost dead, as if he were not going to bowl at all, but to turn back again and have another try. He must get very little impetus from his run when he finally looses

THE SPORTING LIFE

the ball. He seems as if he might almost as well bowl standing still.

Though the scoring became slower in face of this novel attack, it was still fast enough, and Bardsley and Pellew kept the fielders busy running after balls that seemed to reach the southern boundary with astonishing ease. I heard one man explaining to his neighbour that Lord's ground is 7 ft. lower at the south side than at the north, as though the ball rolled automatically down the slope and made 4 for the batsman at the merest tap. Bardsley and Pellew certainly gave it the necessary taps.

Bardsley played with magnificent strength and staidness, though he was limping and in apparent pain, and constantly rubbing his thigh. As for Pellew, he struck out at everything that it was safe to strike at, and scored 43, though the crowd had yelled "Out!" excitably some time before, believing that he was leg-before-wicket.

"I wouldn't like to have that crowd as umpire," said an Australian spectator sarcastically.

The last minutes of play were slow enough, when Taylor came in and played the cricket of a man at the practice net who returns ball after ball from an echoing bat, but doesn't hit out in such a way as to endanger anybody.

Still, it was he who swung to the boundary the ball that took the Australians beyond the English total with only three wickets down.

A few minutes later the last ball was bowled, and

TEST MATCHES

twenty or thirty thousand people were pouring over the ground and out of the ground. Luckily, it was easier to get out than to get in. Then the queues began to form up all over again at the bus stages and outside the Underground.

I hurried away on foot, however, as the man who imitated bird-noises with the twopenny toy was still walking up and down whistling like a drunken and disorderly skylark into the ears of anybody who lingered in the neighbourhood.

IX

TEST MATCHES

WOOLLEY THE HERO

WOOLLEY was undoubtedly the hero of the hour. At Lord's on Monday he surpassed even Woolley. His secret, I fancy, was that he was the first Englishman to discover that the Australians are not devils but merely human beings.

He was feeling carefully about—experimenting like a man of science—for this discovery at Trent Bridge. He made his final experiment thrillingly at Lord's on Saturday. On Monday he uttered his “Eureka!” and played like a master of cut and drive who cared no more for either bowler or fielder than a good poet cares for a hostile critic. He realised that his was the best job of all, and he enjoyed his good strokes like finding the right words.

But that comes in a later part of the story.

First of all, there was the crowd to get in, but not the crush to get in, that there had been on Saturday. The management of Lord's had made reasonable arrangements, and one did not see even an ex-Prime Minister struggling helplessly to get near the turnstiles.

TEST MATCHES

At the same time, the crowd in the popular parts of the ground did not settle down into the calm that becomes a cricket match until long after the play had begun.

Those who had arrived early found—in one corner of the ground at least—that they could not see the game because of the cross-current of eager late-comers who streamed endlessly past them in search of good positions. The yells of “Sit down!” during the first hour were like the yells of angry barrackers. They were like the clamour of ten thousand sea-gulls when the herring fleet arrives in St Ives harbour.

At length a school of policemen was sent over to settle matters, and after a little dexterous assort-
ment, during which a great many indignant young men had to shift their positions, the clamour died down.

On the whole, however, it was a noisy day’s cricket. Some people were for a time noisy because they could not see. The crowd in general quickly became noisy because of what it did see.

Bardsley, with 88 not out on Saturday, had seemed a gigantic and scarcely challengeable figure. Consequently, when Woolley, in the slips, caught almost his first attempt to tip one of Douglas’s fast balls to the boundary, the crowd was delighted as at the fall of a noble enemy.

This success put strength into Durston’s arm, and swiftness into his cast, and immediately afterwards

THE SPORTING LIFE

Armstrong, a giant even among giants, saw his middle stump torn from the ground before he had scored a single run.

The shout that greeted this was like the shout of a football crowd when the winning goal is scored. I heard an Australian who had been just outside the ground at the time saying to somebody : "It didn't sound human. It was like machine-guns firing from a corrugated iron roof." It didn't sound quite like that. But exaggeration is half the battle.

Then Gregory, third of the giants, came, and, after a few balls, began to teach the crowd the folly of premature shouting.

Though a right-handed bowler, he is a left-handed bat, and in his mighty hands the bat seems a smaller thing than in the hands of other men—more like a racquet or a scoop than a bat. He often uses it, indeed, to scoop the ball round to the leg-side, and he misses no chance of making a run, however perilous.

He is a bony, high-stepping man, and he sets out to run with much the same spring as when he bowls. He is not, the experts say, a faultless player, and, indeed, it was just a chance that he was not caught off Durston's swift-paced bowling early in his innings.

He earned his 52, however, by the splendid frequency with which he aimed at the boundary, loosening his shoulders and driving the ball with a beautiful assurance.

TEST MATCHES

Taylor, too, played with much more assurance than he had shown on Saturday. It was evidently the Australian cue not to treat the English bowling too reverently, but in the end Taylor got his leg in front of the wicket to a fast ball from Douglas, and had to leave the field with his score at 36.

He is noticeable among the Australians for (among other things) the "duncher" cap that he wears low down over his forehead, such as you see on the cinema.

Six wickets were now down for 230 runs, and the match had regained something of the excitement of a race.

Even the Australian spectators, who had congregated under their own starry flag in the north-west corner of the ground, began to feel a little anxious, as could be judged from a blood-curdling scream emitted by a too-patriotic lady when Gregory had the closest possible shave, and seemed in danger of being run out. That scream, and the roar of general laughter that followed it, however, relieved the tension.

Parkin was by this time bowling instead of Douglas—bowling with a grace second only to Macdonald's.

He is a man of exactly the right height, with exactly the right width of shoulders, and exactly the right rhythm of step, who bowls with exactly the right pace. A dark man, he alone of the English team wears a narrow black band round his waist

THE SPORTING LIFE

that makes him a conspicuous figure of black-and-whiteness.

He begins his run with face slightly lowered, and the ball in his left hand. Then he raises his face, passes the ball into his right hand, and brings his arm round as if making a perfect circle. His bowling, though not what critics call fast, was too fast for Hendry, who batted, indeed, in the unadventurous fashion of the English batsmen on Saturday.

As for Parkin he proved in the end to be too much even for Gregory, running up the pitch and catching him from his own bowling. Apart from his batting, indeed, he played with Australian skill, and was one of the few English fielders who showed that he had the genius for making his lines impenetrable.

He caught Mailey as he had caught Gregory, off his own bowling, and altogether played a game that was as charming to watch as it was reasonably successful.

With nine wickets down for 289, it looked as though the Australians might have to fight for the match after all. But Carter changed all that.

Carter is the comedian of the Australian team. His midget-like stature is itself a joke. His little jerky walk is a joke. If he misses a ball he looks up and beams behind his moustache. To see him exchange a jest with Armstrong is to see Tom Thumb and Falstaff laughing together.

TEST MATCHES

But as a batsman he is not by any means a joke.

He can cut, he can pull the ball to leg, with any giant among them. He undoubtedly was nearly out more than once—sometimes to his own obvious amusement. But he stayed in long enough to make 46 in the company of Macdonald.

With Australia all out for 342, the match was not yet irretrievably lost to England, and when the Englishmen came out to bat after lunch they looked as if they had been reading all the papers and had, in consequence, taken lessons in how not to be hypnotised either by demons or by fat men.

Unfortunately for him, Knight had not learnt his lesson perfectly, and, when he had scored only one, he swept the ball like a schoolboy high into the air over his head and was caught by Carter.

When Woolley came out, he and Dipper soon made it evident that they no longer regarded either Gregory or Macdonald as a fast bowler. Considering the way in which the Australian fielders spread a net for even the most brilliant batsmen, the long stand made by Dipper and Woolley, and the confidence with which they batted, were all but in the great tradition of cricket.

It was not that the bowling was not dangerous—even physically dangerous. Gregory wounded both of them.

At one point the ball caught Woolley just below the right kidney, and the game had to be stopped while Armstrong went over and massaged his back,

THE SPORTING LIFE

Gregory coming up in evident distress over the result of his ball.

But Woolley quickly had his revenge, sending the red ball flying to right and to left as he pleased.

As for Dipper, he was struck on the hand, and had to take his glove off and shake out the pain. But he, too, took his revenge on the next ball, and drove it almost to the boundary.

I do not know if he has all the varied skill of Woolley. He loves the bold drive of the ball, where Woolley loves to "snick" it—I think that is the word—between his bat and his legs to the boundary.

With Dipper gone, however, and Hendren once more unfortunate, allowing the ball to run up his bat and fly from the tips of Carter's fingers into Gregory's hands, it became moderately certain that there was going to be no race for victory after all.

But at least there was more of a race at Lord's than there had been at Nottingham. At Nottingham no lady could possibly have been excited enough to utter that blood-curdling scream.

X

TEST MATCHES

TENNYSON'S CAPTAINCY AT LEEDS

THE field at Headingley is as round as that Round Table concerning which the Hon. Lionel Tennyson's grandfather wrote a great deal of verse that Englishmen no longer read. On the first day of the third Test Match it scarcely looked like a field at all.

If you can imagine a long-disused billiard-table on which people have been spilling tea and stout and cigarette ashes for a hundred years you will get some notion of the ruin that had been wrought upon the grass by the incessant sun. It had as many colours as Joseph's coat, and they were all the wrong colours. It had been carefully valeted, no doubt, but none the less it was frayed, faded, and in rags.

A Yorkshireman assured me that nothing worth calling a crowd was present. Thirty-three thousand people have been known to pack themselves into the ground, and on Saturday there were only twenty-one thousand.

I do not know where the other twelve thousand could have been fitted in. The ground seemed to me to be overflowing with human beings right up to

THE SPORTING LIFE

the top of the walls, and the overhanging elder bushes. Large family parties had collected on the balconies of the slated brick villas that overlook the ground.

It was the first Test Match of the year at which thousands of the spectators wore straw hats, and of these thousands hundreds wore handkerchiefs under their hats to protect the backs of their necks from the evil eye of the sun.

Not that the heat was overwhelming ; there was a current of coolness in the air. What made the day almost intolerable, however, was a gramophone, or rather a stentorphone, that bellowed advertisements at us during the waits. It asked us in a voice louder than was ever used for selling coal in the streets, “Have you read the —?” mentioning a paper of which you have perhaps never even heard the name.

At length the crowd could endure it no longer, and groaned in impotent despair at each new mention of the paper. I foresee a time when all the rival papers will have stentorphones at cricket matches shouting raucously against each other like bookmakers. It is one way of destroying the peace of the cricket field, and bringing it nearer the ideal of a Bank Holiday on Hampstead Heath.

As for the match itself, Douglas, after making way for Tennyson, had to be the English captain after all.

Tennyson’s brief captaincy had been an immense

TEST MATCHES

success apart from his loss of the toss. He had seen two perilous Australian batsmen out for 45 runs.

Then, as he stooped to field a ball hit ever so gently by Macartney, he misjudged the distance, or the ball must have been more fiery than it looked, spinning over that fiery ground. He snatched back his hand, looked at it, and showed it to the players near him, like a child with a cut finger asking for sympathy.

Holding up his thumb, which one could not help imagining all bloody, he ran to the pavilion and stayed there, while Hallows came out and fielded as his substitute. Australia had not drawn first blood, but she had drawn blue blood.

Douglas, after his failure at Nottingham and Lord's, had evidently come prepared to play the match of his life. As he bowled his first over with long jumping strides—long at least for his middling size—he had the air of showing you how stumps can be torn out by the roots by sheer will-power, assisted by a small red ball.

Bardsley and Andrews did not mind. They replied by showing how a small red ball, even a small red-hot ball, can be hit to the boundary. Douglas merely raised his foot in a larger and more determined stride, and Bardsley struck out, sending the ball singing like a bee into the slips. He was out. Woolley had caught it.

This was a piece of good fortune for England. Bardsley has all the qualities of a stone wall except

THE SPORTING LIFE

its inability to hit back. The first line of Australia's defences was down, and the crowd was jubilant.

Again and again Douglas leaped up to the wicket with turned-out toes, caring little if the ball was occasionally tricked by the edge of the bat into the corner of the field. Andrews, feeling masterful, struck out as Bardsley had done, and again the ball went singing like a bee, and Woolley sprang at it, stretching out his arm to twice its natural length, and the second Australian was out with the score at 45.

Meanwhile Macartney had begun his beautiful innings. He is a small, long-chinned man, who wears the peak of his cap low down over his eyes in a way that makes him look like a jockey. On his feet he is a light-weight. He does everything lightly. I doubt if his feet make any noise when he runs. He has the gift of striking the ball all but silently to the boundary. He gives you the illusion that he is playing with a tennis ball.

One can hardly believe that so feathery a touch can have made the ball travel so far. Yet it did travel. It travelled into every corner of the field except where a fielder was. His is the art of the Artful Dodger. He glances round under the peak of his cap to see where every fielder is, and with a turn of the wrist he has the ball running like a rat half-way between two of them, and two exhausted Englishmen charging after it to the boundary.

He caused a curious scene on Saturday. As the

TEST MATCHES

clock struck twelve he stood away from the wicket while the bell sounded, puzzling the crowd, the fielders, and Douglas, who waited impatiently to get on with his bowling. It brought into the cricket field a strange reminiscence of a Catholic village pausing from its activities at the noon Angelus.

Almost before the twelfth slow stroke had sounded Macartney had his bat in position again, and a relieved laugh went round the mystified spectators.

White had meanwhile been bowling from the far end. He is a slow left-handed bowler. He sails up to the wicket, like a moving ninepin, with the shortest of runs, and then precipitates a full pitched ball with far more force than you have been led to expect.

It must be the spin of the ball that he holds in fingers gnarled round it like the exposed roots of a beech that makes his bowling so difficult to play. He got no wicket on Saturday, but the bowling analysis does not do justice to the skill with which for a time he kept the Australians from making runs. On Saturday Macartney and Pellew would probably have beaten any English bowlers. They certainly beat White, as they beat Douglas and Parkin and Hearne and all the rest of them.

Pellew faced Douglas with a bare head that shone like the sun. Douglas's own hair shone like a mirror, but it was the sun's day. Pellew as the Sun God blazed triumphantly. He is the Apollo to Macartney's Hermes.

THE SPORTING LIFE

He has no cunning, but drives the ball with glorious and careless strength. He swept the ball again and again into the long field or round his legs into the sky. In vain was bowler after bowler tried against this invincible pair.

Parkin came on amid Northern cheers, measured the distance of his run, and marked the starting-point with his foot in the dusty grass with the gesture of a scratching hen. When bowling, he marches back from the wicket with a long springing stride. Then, at the right point, he swerves abruptly, rushes towards the wicket with black head lowered, and looses the ball with a fury that he hopes is like the fury of the Australians.

But it was no use. Macartney cut it ; Pellew hit it. Macartney sent it to the left ; Pellew sent it to the right.

It was equally in vain that Hearne bowled at the other end. To watch Hearne bowling you would think that he had a little short arm in which the forearm had been left out and the hand was merged in the elbow.

He gives the arm a funny little twist, and the ball a funny little throw, and you would be rather surprised if you saw a wicket falling in consequence. On Saturday a wicket didn't.

Jupp is another matter. Jupp is a sturdy, medium-sized man with the shoulders of a bear, whose rush, like that of a bear, is dangerous.

He rushed on Saturday till he melted, and his

TEST MATCHES

bright hair lost its polish. But Australia was not to be rushed. It was itself doing all the rushing that was necessary.

A local patriot called out mockingly: "Put a Yorkshireman on to bowl"; but I doubt if even a Yorkshireman would have made any difference.

First Macartney was 50, then Pellew was 50. First Australia was 100, then Macartney was 100. There was no relief from the monotony, save when some small incident occurred, such as Pellew's striking the ball in such a way that it nested between his pad and his knee, and had to be retrieved by Brown, the wicket-keeper.

Brown, by the way, is a tall man whose gloved hands are as the hands of a giant as he crouches over the wicket.

At last Pellew was out, as a result of sending a ball into the air straight to Hearne. Taylor then came in and made 50, which was becoming a habit with the Australians.

Gregory followed, and stood at the wicket for a few seconds like a bewildered kangaroo. He did not seem even to see the ball as it flew past him. It did not fly past him very often, for he was out fifth ball for one run.

Lancashire colliers threw up their caps with delight and stood up to laugh congratulations to each other, for the wicket was Parkin's.

Parkin's bowling was at this point terrific. He was bumping the ball half-way down the iron pitch

THE SPORTING LIFE

as though he saw himself in the part of a Lancashire Gregory.

He bowled for a time as he had probably never bowled before, his dark eyes alight with his inflexible purpose. It is no exaggeration—at least, it is only a little one—to say that you could see the gleam in them from the stands.

He was now the wielder of lightnings, and even Macartney was compelled to realise that a new element had entered into the game.

His eye was too slow to follow so swift a ball. He suddenly found himself with his legs before the wicket mixed up with a ball that he had hoped to catch with his bat, and he limped in pain off the ground, amid the cheers of a crowd that was enthusiastic to see him bat with such consummate genius and still more enthusiastic to see him out.

Nor could Hendry play the balls that had puzzled Gregory and bewildered Macartney.

Parkin sent deadly fire at his wicket, and he was clean bowled before he had scored a run.

But that was the end of it. Armstrong came in and pitted his eighteen stone against the ball, with results disastrous to the ball.

If Parkin was determined, Armstrong was more so, and he did not pause till he had lifted the ball right over the boundary among the spectators for 6.

His partner was the little Carter, who got an ovation as the only Yorkshireman playing on either side. And Carter, small as he is, played as if he

TEST MATCHES

also weighed eighteen stone, and hit fours as freely as though the field were no bigger than a ping-pong table.

After Jupp had taken his wicket, Macdonald took his place, and he, too, began to slog with the obvious purpose of getting the score up to 400. He crouched over the bat with bent knees, and it was not long till he had sent the ball for 6 even further among the spectators than Armstrong. Then Douglas came on to bowl again, and Armstrong, tipping the ball as it passed, was caught by Brown at the wicket.

After that Parkin soon got Mailey "caught and bowled," and England was left with thirty minutes' batting before stumps were drawn.

Alas, poor Woolley! He was the first to go. Gregory stepped higher than usual, gave his tiger spring more fiercely than usual, and bowled straighter than usual, and the wicket was gone without a run.

It was truly no day for left-handed batsmen: Bardsley had failed, Gregory had failed, and now Woolley failed.

As one watched England batting, one got the impression that the boundary was an infinite distance from the batsmen. While the Australians were batting one got the impression that the boundary was a narrow circle; that the ball, if touched at all, could hardly help reaching it.

I feel sure that it was the difference in the fielding

THE SPORTING LIFE

that created this double illusion. It was the difference between keenness and leisureliness. It was the fielding of the Australians rather than their batting, or even their wonderful bowling, that made them an apparently invincible team.

XI

TEST MATCHES

BROWN'S AMUSING INNINGS

THE second day of the Test Match at Leeds opened in football weather. The morning was chilly and dark. The general feeling of the spectators was chilly and dark.

Everybody was besieging his neighbour with the questions, Would Hobbs bat? Would Tennyson bat? Would it rain? Why are the public buildings in Leeds so black?

Rumour at least had settled the first question. Hobbs, it was said, had appendicitis. He was on the ground, but a specialist had been sent for.

Englishmen are commonly reported to take their pleasures sadly. There was nothing else for them to do to-day. At the same time, it seemed auspicious that the two batsmen who were to open the day's play on the English side should be footballers, inured to football conditions.

Ducat did not last more than a quarter of an hour, at the end of which he tipped the ball into Gregory's hands.

Hardinge, on the other hand, treated the bowling of both Gregory and Macdonald with breezy facility,

THE SPORTING LIFE

and had it not been that the Australian fielders can race towards the boundary much faster than a fast ball, he would have scored considerably more than 25.

When Armstrong, who had come on to bowl, sent a slow and dexterous ball between his feet, the field paused doubtfully for a moment before he was given out leg-before-wicket.

Douglas and Jupp now began to attempt an exhibition of masterful batting. In the dull light they looked like twins. They are twins in height and twins in the parting of their hair. They also batted like twins, answering single with single, and not even leaving a four long without its companion four.

Douglas was wounded at an early stage, and bent over his bat in pain as the result of a shaft from Macdonald that caught him inside the knee. A few minutes later he sent his bat flying down the pitch after striking the ball.

He and Jupp were hitting out and running the sort of close-shave runs that bring back excitement into the game.

But it was not long before Jupp struck with too blind a confidence at Gregory, and an all but missed ball was flicked into the wicket-keeper's hands. The score was 67 for five wickets.

The position of England was worse even than it had been at the same stage at Nottingham. The batting of Brown, who took Jupp's place, however,

TEST MATCHES

differentiated this Test Match from all other Test Matches.

Brown is a huge left-handed batsman, whose favourite gesture is to swoop down on the ball with a circular pull and aim it at the boundary. He swung his bat like a club—a Hercules of the cricket field.

On one occasion he swung with such violence that, missing the ball, he also missed his footing, and danced on unsteady feet right round his wicket, on which he was in imminent danger of falling.

The crowd was by now in laughing mood. A laugh went round the spectators when Armstrong sent all his fielders but one to the leg side, and rolled up apparently innocent little balls to tempt Brown to hit them into the air. Brown swung and missed. The next ball bounced lazily. Brown swung again, and this time there was no mistake about it. The ball went faster and farther than any fielder.

It could not be said of Brown that he had resisted temptation, but he had not succumbed to it. He simply met the serpent half way and belaboured it. Armstrong in the end had to admit that he had failed in the rôle of tempter, and he handed over the part, though not the make-up, to Mailey.

Nothing, however, could stop Brown from scoring. The very fielders seemed to be in league with him. Even Pellew began to let the ball run past him. Australians are not accustomed to this Christmas chill on the cricket field. Their fingers were

THE SPORTING LIFE

probably numb with cold, as my own are while writing these words.

As for the crowd, it kept its hands warm by applauding Brown. He did not score with desperate haste, but when he did score he scored with a resounding bang.

He had overtaken Douglas's total well before luncheon, and in the very last over before luncheon he took his own score up to 50 and the English score to 151. He went off to luncheon through a crowd that was as wild with excitement as it was possible to be in the circumstances.

Meanwhile, the evening papers had come out, and newsboys were crying, "Serious illness of Hobbs!" as the best-selling news of the hour.

After luncheon, during which the appalling gramophone was again turned on, Douglas and Brown settled down to scoring singles, till Macdonald sent down a little red terror that Brown just touched and sent flying through the frozen Australian slips for 4. On a warmer day one of them would have caught it.

Immediately afterwards Douglas's score was up to 50, and it seemed that the great defence in a lost cause had dug itself in. But Brown at last was tempted by Mailey, and sent the easiest catch in the world to Armstrong at mid-off. His innings of 57 had been both amusing and romantic.

Romantic, though not amusing, was the full-pitched ball with which Macdonald immediately

TEST MATCHES

afterwards struck White's middle stump till it leaned over like a tree after the world's greatest gale.

When Tennyson came out with his injured hand he got the cheers due to a wounded warrior, and great was the delight when he swept a ball of Macdonald's to leg so that it almost beat Taylor in its race to the boundary.

Great was the delight when he cut Mailey low along the grass for 4, though there was a deep howl of horror followed by a roar of relief when he sent the next ball within reach of Mailey's hand and Mailey missed it.

Then Douglas had a piece knocked out of his bat by Macdonald's fury, and at once he fleshed his new bat by sending Macdonald to the boundary. Tennyson emulated him by cutting one ball to the boundary past cover-point, another ball just over the heads of the slips, and sweeping a third to the edge of the field over the head of square-leg.

Then, after an interval, he caught Mailey before the ball had touched the ground and slogged it all but out of the field in the cheerful old-fashioned tradition of cricket.

At ten minutes past three Douglas scored a single and raised the English score to 200, upon which Gregory demanded a new ball from the umpire. The old one had certainly been treated with more brutality than most people had expected from the English cricketers earlier in the morning.

THE SPORTING LIFE

Tennyson showed that he could hit a new ball as well as an old one. His bat flashed—it gleamed, it warmed the air. He stands with a curiously stumpy attitude at the wicket, but he rises into noble grace as he gathers up all the power in his body for a lofty drive or a fine fencing cut where there are no Australians to interrupt the ball's flight to the boundary.

He reached his 50 with a stroke that turned Gregory's bowling fire into batsman's fire that was too hot for the men in the slips to hold on its way past for 4. The only time the ball was lost, however, it did not even reach the boundary, but lay dead in a patch of sand-coloured grass, where Pellew looked for it in the helpless bewilderment of a sand-blind man. This, too, caused roars of laughter.

Armstrong now tried every possible change of bowling. He did not keep any bowler long at work, but put on one after another till he himself at last succeeded where the others had failed, and got the wicket that had withstood all the elements of bowling since the beginning of the day.

Douglas was out after as dogged a 75 as has ever been slowly piled up in the face of odds. The crowd rose to its feet to cheer him, and hats were waved excitedly. Douglas deserved it.

As for Parkin, who followed him, he gave a delightful display of comic batting that made the crowd hysterical with laughter, and left the very fielders

TEST MATCHES

holding their sides. He is one of the most graceful of bowlers, but he bats with abrupt, jerky movements that make his every stroke a jest. He also keeps pretending to run in a way that makes his partner tremble in his shoes and the fielders lose their heads, while the crowd laughs uproariously.

His batting had, however, its sensationally serious aspect. His first run was merely funny, but when he struck out at Armstrong, and pulled him to the boundary, he raised the score to a point which prevented England from having to follow-on.

And he was just in time. Immediately afterwards Tennyson struck at a ball and tipped it into the hands of Gregory, always terrible as a lion in the gates. It was as sensational an end to the innings as could have been desired. To have scored 259 was, in the circumstances, a great achievement. Meanwhile the newsboys were shouting: "Result of Hobbs's operation!" It is an ill wind that blows nobody good.

After tea Bardsley and Andrews batted for Australia in dingdong fashion, scoring off Douglas and White with workmanlike ease, but with more than English speed.

They were missed, but not missed discreditably, several times. Jupp was put on, and carried Bardsley's stumps by rush tactics, but not before the score was 70.

The crowd was by this time larger by several thousands than it had been since the match began,

THE SPORTING LIFE

and the boundary was littered with orange peel and waste paper after the manner of a public holiday.

But the keenness had gone out of the game. The very excellence of the Australians had become monotonous. Parkin caused greater public interest by juggling the ball into his hand with his foot than even did the swordwork of Macartney.

The crowd was ready to laugh at anything. It laughed when Brown, standing behind the wicket, began hunting for the ball, which obviously could not be five yards away, and eventually discovered it between his knee and his pad. But the game itself had gone as flat as a pancake.

There is no spectacle of which human beings tire more quickly than victory. There is some old nursery nonsense that runs : "Then Johnny sat down and told me that story over and over and over again." That is what the Australians had done.

One could appreciate the cricket no longer. If one did, it was only because it had made the gramophone stop.

XII

TEST MATCHES

AUSTRALIA WINS THE RUBBER

IT was easy to get a taxi to the Headingley ground on the third day. Charabanes had gone down from a shilling to sixpence a seat. There were probably not more than five thousand people present when play started, and yet it was both a beautiful and a critical day.

There was a summer haze over the ground in contrast to the winter haze of the previous day, yet the only group of spectators who had come in as great numbers as on other days were the disabled soldiers in hospital blue.

On arriving at the ground one was met with the usual gloomy question: "Have you heard the news?"

Douglas, it was rumoured, would be unable to play. His wife had been seized with sudden illness and had to be operated on immediately. Durston, who had spent the greater part of Saturday and Monday sitting in the pavilion and writing autographs, was fielding in Douglas's place. Superstitious people were saying that England should never travel with thirteen players again.

THE SPORTING LIFE

The play began unexcitingly, though five Australian wickets had fallen within an hour and a quarter. So withered was the grass that the game looked like a game played on the sand of the seashore. Most of the English fielders wore sweaters, in spite of the fine morning. Though there was an air of seaside idleness over the field, the fielding and the bowling were both keener and more cunning than in any previous Australian innings during the Test Matches.

Tennyson imitated Armstrong's tactics in making swift and numerous changes in the bowling. Andrews was the first Australian to fall. I doubt if any cricketer ever scored a less exciting 92 in a Test Match. It was not Andrews's fault ; it was simply that nobody thought it mattered much whether he scored nine or ninety.

He is a man of talent rather than of genius—a sturdy policeman of the wicket, who can give a defaulting ball a violent shaking.

White then set about justifying his reputation as a dangerous bowler. His bowling reminds one of angling ; it is a peaceful occupation and he uses the most tempting of bait. Pellew could not resist it, and was caught by Ducat at mid-on after a characteristic Pellew swipe. Taylor could not resist it, and was caught high up in Tennyson's right hand at mid-off. Gregory could not resist it, and a mere tip sent the ball into the hands of Jupp, who was fielding third man.

TEST MATCHES

White himself missed two one-handed catches off his own bowling, but he would have needed the quick genius of a Parkin or a Gregory to bring them off. Even Woolley missed a catch with those inevitable hands of his. Parkin had sent up a ball swifter than swift to Hendry, who tipped it to the wicket-keeper, who tipped it on to Woolley, who dropped it like a hot potato. Parkin received the ball back with a smile of forgiveness.

When Australia, with seven wickets down for 273, declared its innings at an end, the only English bowler with an average worth crowing about was White, who had taken three wickets for 37 runs.

The English team came out for its second innings with more signs of accidents. Brown, the huge wicket-keeper, who was batting along with Hardinge, had apparently hurt himself, and Hallows came on with an extra bat to run for him.

Hardinge, who had been fielding magnificently, was the unluckiest of batsmen. He was given out leg before wicket in the first innings, though it is reported that even the Australians believe that he had struck the ball before it reached his leg. To-day, after making 5, he was out as the result of a catch that nobody else but Gregory could have held.

Even Gregory had to make himself nine feet high and leap into the air after the ball. He was just able to stop it, but sprang at it again as it fell from his hands, and this time held it.

THE SPORTING LIFE

The most dreaded thing in Test Match cricket is to have to face Macdonald's bowling with Gregory waiting in the slips.

After luncheon the Australians came out in playful mood. As they left the pavilion a lady in a mustard-coloured coat was lying in wait for them, among the usual mob of photographers, and they came to a halt with military precision while she snapped them, amid applause due to a comedy.

Before the batsmen arrived, the fielders amused themselves like children by throwing each other catches of the joking sort. One thing was noticeable: they had all realised that it was a warm day, except Macdonald, who wore the usual white sweater with its yellow and green shoulder-collar. These, a spectator remarked, are the colours of Sinn Fein.

Brown and Hearne immediately began to play delightful cricket of the kind that aims at the rim of the field. Hearne is not much bigger than a good-sized frog, but there is a fine solidity as well as skill about his play, and he can cut to the boundary with any man through all the traps of the defences.

Mailey was put on at a quarter to three to lure him skywards, but he immediately cut him with a fine stroke that Andrews found much too hot to hold. Unfortunately, in the next over he treated Macdonald as he was meant to treat Mailey, and spooned the ball in the foolsiest of catches into the hands of Taylor at mid-on.

TEST MATCHES

Woolley then came on and greased the first ball through the massed slips for 4. Brown, meanwhile, was hobbling every time he moved his feet, and after making a stroke he often drew himself up in the stiffness of pain. After attempting the Umslopogaas touch on a ball from Mailey, he staggered about in a ring like a tortured animal. He could endure the effort of hitting the ball, but the effort of missing it was evidently like walking down a steep step that isn't there in the dark.

The game became exciting again as these two left-handed batsmen in blue caps stood up and attempted to achieve the impossible. They attempted to achieve it, moreover, not cautiously, but boldly, and Brown drove Macdonald straight to the white sight-boards with as little nervousness as though he had been on a winning side.

But it was too good to last. He attempted to pull a fast Gregory ball to leg, missed it, and failed to get his limping feet out of the way in time, and was out leg before wicket for a 46 that was more gallant than most centuries. He was cheered with waving hats on his way back to the pavilion.

Then we were surprised to see the glossy head of Douglas moving through the crowd to play after all. Three wickets were down for 98, but this was a game of miracles as well as accidents, and it still seemed just possible for England to save herself from defeat by a miracle.

THE SPORTING LIFE

Twice in one over did Woolley send Mailey's slow full-pitched ball flying like a swallow, and alighting just within the boundary, but a few minutes later, after once more sweeping Mailey to leg for 4 and tipping him through the slips for 2, he played a little fatuous ball on to his wicket and was out for 37.

Ducat, who followed, lasted only a moment when he stepped out to hit Mailey, and was stumped before he could get back into the crease. A minute later Gregory bowled one of those straight shooting invincible balls that genius itself could not stand up against, and Douglas's off stump lay over like a broken flower.

Six wickets were now down for 128, and nobody believed any longer that even a miracle could save the game.

Tennyson delighted the crowd by hitting Gregory first for 4 and then for 4, and then for 2 in the same over. The next ball, however, caught him in the flesh above the knee, and sent him squirming with pain, while Gregory came up to condole with him. But he scored off the next ball again.

Then Jupp also began to be ambitious of scoring fours. He pulled first Gregory and then Mailey nobly to the boundary, but none of the English players was comfortable with Mailey, whose bowling seems as inoffensive as an elderly hen. It seems almost unkind to hit it yet it apparently

TEST MATCHES

deceives the eye more effectively than far faster bowling.

Every now and then Mailey makes the batsman confident by sending him a ball that he simply has to swish to the boundary. But the next ball dodges its way slowly behind the bat and leaves the batsman feeling like a gasping fish.

Immediately after the interval Armstrong's very first ball sailed into Tennyson's wicket, leaving only two wickets to fall and rather more than 200 runs needed to save the game.

White began, like so many of the other batsmen, by pulling Mailey to the boundary. In the next over Jupp touched a ball from Armstrong with the handle of his bat, and was caught at the wicket.

Parkin came on as England's last hope, and not much of a hope at that, but his friends greeted him with "Bravo, Parkin!" as though he were a maker of centuries, and laughed delightedly when he scored off his first ball. Then White stole a short run, and the field shrieked as the ball was thrown at the wicket.

Parkin hit again, and once more the ball was thrown at the wicket amid excitement and laughter. After that he skied the ball for a perilous 2, and then Mailey put an end to the fun, and the match was over, with the crowd of sightseers flying over the sandy field like a poolful of demented tadpoles.

THE SPORTING LIFE

Well, it was a good match. It was infinitely the best of the three critical Test Matches.

The English team had put up a great fighting defence.

The match was at an end, but that gramophone from Gehenna was still squalling.

XIII

TEST MATCHES

A ROW AT THE OVAL

IT would be easy to make too much of the scenes that occurred at the Oval on Saturday, when the fifth Test Match was begun. But at least they brought a few minutes' dramatic excitement into as tedious a day's cricket as it would be possible to imagine.

It all came of too much inspection of the wicket. The crowd got tired of sitting round an empty field with nothing happening but half-hourly strolls on the part of the two captains in their blazers from the pavilion to the wicket and back again.

Armstrong would stoop down and feel the ground with his hand as a doctor "palps" a patient in order to discover the place where it hurts. Impatient voices would assail him: "Come along!" "Play up!" Standing up, however, he would demonstratively shake the water off his hand as a cat shakes its forefoot after having stepped in a puddle.

After a time the crowd made up its mind that, if inspecting the wicket was to be the only sport of the day, it would relieve the monotony for everybody to do it.

THE SPORTING LIFE

A number of the bolder spirits, having decided that the wicket could be passed as at least C3, then made their way towards the pavilion, and began to call loudly for the players to come out.

They were joined by a thousand or so other people who had come to see what was happening. They seemed to have got it into their heads that it was Armstrong who was responsible for holding up the game, and one youth went so far as to suggest that the Australians were afraid to face England.

Imitating the voice of a newsboy he yelled : “Speshul ; Orstrylia runs away !” Others contented themselves with bellowing : “Come out of it !” “Be sportsmen !” “Play up !” One youth every now and then interjected a wonderful “*Coo-ee !*” like the cry of a shriek-owl prolonged and a hundred times magnified.

This subtle invitation to the Australians to come out dissolved the anger of the crowd into laughter, and the laughter became universal when a breath of wind lifted the canvas awning over the pavilion seats and upset a gallon of water that lay there in a pool, drenching the man who stood under it. That is always an excellent joke.

As the tumult continued, a policeman made his way to the pavilion and hurried up the steps, with the evident desire to get somebody to do something.

An instant later, Tennyson appeared on a balcony, holding up his hand for silence. But there was no

TEST MATCHES

silence—only worse pandemonium, with most people cheering, and the rest interrupting one another with a thousand indistinguishable remarks.

Tennyson beamed on them, like a fair-haired undergraduate about to make a speech amid the tumult of a “rag.” His smile at length took effect. Amid what was as much like silence as could be expected, he bent forward and, in the voice of one not accustomed to open-air oratory, called out: “If you people will get back to your places, Mr Armstrong and I will inspect the wicket.”

This simple speech, in spite of the charm with which it was delivered, merely served to inflame the crowd. They did not wish to see the wicket inspected. They wished to see the game resumed.

Instead of going back to their places they began to shout all the louder: “Where’s Armstrong?” and to chant in chorus: “We—want—Armstrong! We—want—Armstrong! We—want—Armstrong!”

This naturally led to the wicket not being inspected, and this in turn led to increasing turbulence on the part of a section of the crowd. Tennyson at last could endure it no longer. He came down the pavilion steps and made his way through the surging crowd towards the wicket.

After Tennyson’s return to the pavilion the clamorous section of the crowd still remained on the field, calling for Armstrong, cheering Fender, cheering Tennyson, and then, one or two of them, booing Armstrong again.

THE SPORTING LIFE

Tennyson's report on the wicket was apparently, as they say, "favourable," for in a few minutes a boy was sent out into the crowd carrying a black-board with the inscription chalked on it: "If no more rain, play will take place at 5.15."

That meant another half-hour's waiting, but it changed the temper of the crowd sufficiently to enable a score or so of policemen to shepherd the people slowly back to their places and off the field of play.

Once back in their places, the crowd waited patiently till a quarter past five, and shortly afterwards it was cheering the appearance of the umpires.

When Armstrong and his men tripped down the steps, however, bad temper broke out again, and there were volleys of boos mingled with the general cheering. Cries of "Shame!" were raised by the more sportsman-like section of the crowd, and the cheering in the end entirely drowned the booing.

But all through the afternoon the malcontents showed that they had not forgiven Armstrong. They jeered when he tested the condition of the wicket with his foot, and one man called out: "Roll on it! Roll on it!" They cheered him derisively every time he fielded the easiest ball. They shouted at him if he seemed to walk in too leisurely a manner to his place in the field.

In the end, it was as if Armstrong had resolved to amuse them out of their anger. He never moved but he ran. He would bolt even the shortest distance,

TEST MATCHES

like a fat man running desperately to catch a train that is just moving out of the station.

Great is the power of comedy. Gradually ill-temper faded, and men remembered that they had come to watch an entertainment and not to take part in a squalling match.

As I have said, the row itself was a comparatively small affair, and only a tiny minority made themselves hoarse joining in it. It was interesting because of its novelty rather than because of its seriousness. It was interesting, too, because it did express in a rude and unlovely way the boredom that nearly everybody felt.

The truth is, Saturday was no day for cricket as the game is now played. When I arrived in town at ten o'clock in the morning the rain was dripping down, and the sky in the east was discoloured and dark, like a black eye.

It was still raining when I reached the Oval just before eleven. There was no crowd assaulting the gates. The scene inside the ground was more depressing than a picnic in macintoshes. The Oval is a wonderful cricket ground, but its good qualities even at the best of times are those of usefulness rather than of beauty.

As I sat watching the rain falling, I did my best to be interested in the gasometer by speculating on what would happen if a thunderstorm came on and the gasometer were struck by lightning. I saw myself, in my mind's eye, blown into surprisingly

THE SPORTING LIFE

small bits, some of them travelling as far as Kew, others of them going in a northerly direction and reaching Willesden Junction. Then, just as my thoughts were beginning to get morbid, the rain stopped.

There was no sign of play beginning, however, when half-past eleven came round. Not until some time after twelve did the long preliminary ritual begin—the inspection of the wicket with prodding fingers (Armstrong still wearing the blue suit and grey hat of a private citizen), the rolling-away of the low pent-houses that covered the wicket, the arrival of the bag of sawdust, the spilling of the sawdust so as to make two little yellow hills, the arrival of the stumps, the arrival of a man with a bucket, who set up the stumps and whitewashed the crease, the arrival of the roller, the departure of the roller, the spinning of the coin at the gate of the pavilion, the inspection of the coin on the grass, and then the arrival of the umpires in long robes whiter than whited sepulchres.

Compared to the whiteness of the umpires, the flannelled Australians, as they poured out over the field, seemed figures of a faint and charming yellow, like that of evening primroses. And, indeed, on their appearance, it was as if the field had suddenly blossomed. There was a lingering gleam of summer in the air. It made the slates shine. It made Gregory's and Macdonald's hair shine.

It did not succeed, however, in making the cricket

TEST MATCHES

shine. Gregory, who bowled the first over from opposite the pavilion, did not find the slippery ground the springboard that he needs for his great feats.

Both Russell and Brown settled down to play him with confidence, if without violence. They both scored off his first over, but they seemed to do so in the spirit of men digging themselves in and making occasional small sallies rather than of men about to take a position by assault. The excitement of the play was not owing to any tremendousness in their hitting, but to their readiness to steal every slightest opportunity of a run. Brown, especially, was like a restive horse at the starting post—almost too ready for a forward plunge.

Russell batted with light ping-pong strokes, and looked as if he might have gone on doing so till he had made his century, when something happened, as he tried to sweep a ball of Macdonald's round to leg.

It was impossible for a spectator to say whether he had struck the ball at all, but Oldfield, who had taken Carter's place as wicket-keeper, sprang after it as it bounded into the air, and Russell was out for 13 without apparently believing that he had even touched the ball.

Tyldesley seemed a good deal less confident than he on taking his place. He frequently struck at the ball in the way in which one strikes at an insect that contrives just to keep out of one's way.

THE SPORTING LIFE

Brown played a more resolute game, the bat looking small as a child's bat in his hands as he crouched, a huge figure, over it and scooped the ball past the fielders. He was beginning to score fairly rapidly when Mailey was put on to bowl instead of Macdonald.

But at length Mailey lured him into the mood of a man who believes it is safe to hit out at anything, and sent up a suave little ball that just deceived his eye and took his wicket when his score was 32.

Woolley, who was received as an idol, also showed before long that a good batsman can play almost any sort of bowling, and he delighted the crowd by lifting a ball from Mailey into one of the stands.

It seemed at first to be a 6, but apparently the ball had bounded into the stand off the ground. He, too, looked capable of scoring a century—or, say 99—when he cut a ball in a way that ought to have sent it to the boundary. He attempted to score a second run off it, when Bardsley, who was fielding with the genius of a Pellew, threw the ball fiercely at the wicket from a long way off, and Woolley was run out for 23.

This did not happen, however, till after the rain, and after the interval, and after the second rain (that sent up five thousand umbrellas, giving the crowd on the other side of the ground the appearance of a field of gigantic purple mushrooms), and after the row, and all the rest of it.

TEST MATCHES

Tyldesley was by this time playing more daringly, striking violently at the balls that Macdonald sent bounding round his head. One of these balls struck him on the neck, and play had to be stopped while he recovered. The crowd cheered him uproariously when he caught the next ball and swung it magnificently on its way to the boundary. He drove another ball to the boundary high over the fielders' heads. Then he became reckless, and sent another into the sky. Macartney leaped after it across the field, and Tyldesley was caught out with his score at 39—the highest score of the day.

Mead, who had been his partner for some time, played a game of skilful rather than of massive strokes. He has an amazingly keen eye, that seems both to take in the position of every fielder and to time the ball exactly.

He gives the impression of brilliant preparedness and, with a slight tap, he again and again sent the ball gently into an empty part of the field for a single. A sturdy, left-handed batsman, he does not wait for the ball (as most batsmen do) with his bat pulsing in the block-hole. He beats it against the ground once or twice, then droops his body into the exact position he wants, and awaits the bowling with the bat almost still in his alert hands.

He and Sandham, who had taken Tyldesley's place, were obviously thinking more of keeping the wicket safe for Monday than of performing miracles on Saturday. And, in the queer flow of varying

THE SPORTING LIFE

light in which they batted, it was manifestly the only thing to do.

They were still batting defensively when stumps were drawn at half-past six, with the English score at 129 for four wickets.

It would be a false report, however, that suggested that either the cricket or the scene outside the pavilion was the chief feature of the day at the Oval. The chief feature of the day was the number of yawns during the long waits between shower and shower. There were never before so great a number of yawning faces seen at a cricket match. Everybody had been longing for rain, and, now that it had come, everybody resented it. Hence the scenes.

I think one result of these scenes ought to be to bring about an innovation in the game of cricket. Cricket ought to be a game capable of being played in all weathers. There should be a special wicket for wet days, and the players should be provided with oilskins and non-skid shoes. That would have saved the situation on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the customs of cricket being what they are, the disturbers at the Oval on Saturday should in fairness have directed their anger, not against the Australian captain, but against the English weather. They should have summoned, not Armstrong out of the pavilion, but the sun out of the clouds. It would have been equally effective.

XIV

TEST MATCHES

MEAD SCORES 182 NOT OUT

SANDHAM opened the game for England on the second day with infinite grace and patience, and runs came fast enough as he and Mead became accustomed to the bowling.

Mead, if he played less gracefully, seemed to be more dexterous in finding the loopholes in the field.

He took a special pleasure in waiting, still as a heathen image, for one of Mailey's slow balls, then at the last moment stepping in front of the wicket, catching the ball on its inward hop, and patting it gently but with decision to leg.

Occasionally, however, he struck out and with a scythe-like movement of his bat he swept a ball from Mailey to the boundary.

He seemed at first to be puzzled by Armstrong, who went on to bowl instead of Mailey, but it was off Armstrong that he cut a ball that was only stopped within touch of the boundary and scored a 3 that brought his total up to 50 at about a quarter to twelve.

Nor did Macdonald succeed, where Gregory had

THE SPORTING LIFE

failed, in keeping him from scoring. Him, too, Mead cut through the slips for 4 with a stroke that turned the ball into lightning.

A few overs later it was Macdonald who turned the ball into lightning, and it was Sandham, not Mead, whose eye proved not altogether quick enough to follow it, with the result that his wicket went flying, after he had scored 21.

Tennyson, who followed, seemed to hesitate at Macdonald's first ball, but he sent the third with the edge of his bat to the scoring board.

In the next over, Mead, now playing like a burly giant, drove Armstrong all but to the boundary and, though Taylor picked the ball up beautifully as he ran at full speed, and turned a fine stroke into a mere single, it brought up the score to 200 for five wickets by ten minutes past twelve.

As the score mounted up, Macdonald seemed to be getting tired. His hair was wet and standing up on the back of his skull, and a glass of water was brought for him to wash out his mouth.

Both he and Armstrong kept hitching up their trousers like men in a state of exhaustion.

The batsmen treated them both with respect, as one says, but without fear, and Mead showed something like genius in sending the ball on a flight through the slips without giving the sort of catches that Gregory can hold.

It was off Mailey that Mead scored the single that gave him his century amid a jubilation of hands and

TEST MATCHES

throats that made the crowd seem to quiver like heat rising above a stove.

The fact is, he began to hit Mailey's bowling with the furious ease with which every spectator feels that he would like to hit Mailey's bowling if he had the chance.

Before half-past one Tennyson had sent the score up to 300, whereupon Mead sent in to the pavilion for a new bat.

After lunch Tennyson drove a ball from Macdonald low and straight to the boundary for 4. He attempted to repeat the stroke, missed, and was out for 51.

To Fender, apparently, Macdonald's bowling was invisible as the passing of a great wind. He made several attempts to catch sight of it. At last he saw the ball in time to touch it, but it went straight into Armstrong's hands, and Fender was out without scoring a run.

Hitch, who came next, batted with the gay joy of a schoolboy, who didn't know—and didn't care—that the fastest bowlers in the world were doing all they could to get him out.

Macdonald, however, is not a safe bowler to take too light-heartedly, and Hitch immediately afterwards found himself in a situation in which bat, wicket and ball all seemed to be flying about with great energy. Of the three, the wicket suffered most. Hitch was out for 18.

Mead, with Douglas as his partner, continued to

THE SPORTING LIFE

score with equal ease off Macdonald and Gregory. He scored right, left and centre, and would have scored a great deal more if it had not been for the Argus-eyed Pellew.

The English innings was a fine rather than an exciting one. Mead's greatness is practical rather than romantic—big rather than decorative. He had accomplished a magnificent feat of batsmanship, however, when Tennyson came out of the pavilion in his blazer at ten minutes to four and declared the innings at an end with the score standing at 403 for eight wickets. Mead had scored 182 not out.

As he came off the field, everyone standing up to give him an ovation, Armstrong walked by his side and shook him warmly by the hand in congratulation.

In the interval, a man with a broom came out and swept clouds into the air where Mead had left the wicket in dust. There also came several men with a roller that was much too big for them and rolled the pitch back into virtue. And along with them came the man with the whitewash bucket.

The ground was by now crowded with spectators, who cheered with delight when it was seen that Hitch was to begin the bowling for England.

Hitch, as you know, rushes up the crease in a sort of hop-skip-and-jump movement, and then flings the ball at the wicket with a vehemence that drags the shirt loose from his belt. He did not at once bring down a wicket, but he brought down Collins

TEST MATCHES

with a ball that struck that great little cricketer and left him lying helpless and in pain on the ground.

He was unlucky not to get Collins caught at the wicket, but a few minutes later he clean-bowled Bardsley with a ball that left the stumps leaning at all sorts of angles, and roused the spectators to a roar such as is more common at a football than a cricket match. One Australian wicket was down for 33.

Hardly had Macartney, with his cap so low over his eyes that it was a wonder he could see, begun to give an exhibition of suave grace than he, too, tipped a ball from Hitch that Woolley might have held by a miracle.

The speed that had been too much for Macartney, however, was also too much for Woolley. And so Hitch missed the chance of another wicket.

Macartney seemed to bat with considerably less confidence after this. Repeatedly he struck at the ball and hit only the quiet air.

He quickly got back his confidence, and cut and drove Douglas for 4 three times in one over, bringing the Australian score up to 54 at ten minutes past five.

Immediately afterwards Collins, whirling his body as though trying to protect his face with his bat, trod on his wicket.

Andrews, who succeeded him, whirled his bat to better effect, and swept Hitch's second ball to leg for 4.

THE SPORTING LIFE

Fender and Parkin were put on to bowl, and Andrews's head was more than once in danger from Parkin.

But it was the fielding rather than the bowling that excited the crowd to enthusiasm. Thrice in succession Macartney drove the ball fiercely, and thrice in succession it was held—once by Fender, once by Tennyson and once by Hitch.

He then tipped a ball exquisitely past the slips for 4, all of them run, and received the next ball lamingly on the ankle. In Parkin's next over Macartney sent the ball to right and to left behind the wicket, swift as rays of light.

At ten minutes past six he had pulled a ball from Fender and sent it at the height of a flying sparrow to the boundary, bringing the Australian score up to 101 with two wickets lost. England had lost three wickets on Saturday some time before she had reached this total.

Hitch was put on to bowl again at the Vauxhall end, and twice in one over Macartney cut him to the boundary, Tennyson just missing the ball each time. Andrews treated Parkin's next over in the same way, save that he sent the ball glancing twice to the right instead of to the left boundary.

They had each reached 50 by ten minutes past six. By twenty past the Australian score had passed 150, Woolley's bowling having as little effect on these two admirable artists as the bowling of any of the others.

XV

TEST MATCHES

MERELY PLAYERS

ENGLAND'S first innings at the Oval, like the fourth match at Manchester, had raised one new point of interest. Men began to ask each other whether the Australians were after all invincible.

It became clear enough early in the third day's play that, for Test Match purposes, they were.

The sun, which had been up even before I was, had dried the wicket till the very feet of the batsmen raised clouds on it as they moved. It was an ideal day for watching a nice seaside game—a day of summer holiday, with a gold sun shining on the green setting of a white game, with a ball redder than a billiard ball scuttling without intermission to all parts of the boundary.

It was too late now for the Australians to win the match. What they obviously meant to do was to reach the English score and to add something to it.

Andrews and Taylor were batting—both of them wearing caps with peaks that must have been made to defend the eyes against the blaze of an Australian sun.

THE SPORTING LIFE

They batted for a time like a pair of twins, and to an inexpert eye were almost indistinguishable, as they answered two with two and four with four, or ran a dangerously short single, each on two little legs—that seemed to be as busy as six.

As one watched them sprinting between the wickets one seemed to have a revelation of one of the secrets of the Australian victories. The Australians are a team of sprinters, whether batting or fielding. Few English fielders can pick up the ball while running, as the Australians can, and send it in to the wicket with the skill of a good shot at polo at the very height of a gallop.

These wonderful twins looked for a time as though they intended alone to take the score beyond the English figure. By a quarter to twelve, however, Andrews, who was 94, stepped forward to make short work of a ball from Parkin. He missed it, and it thudded against his pads. Parkin uttered a strangled cry, which may be roughly translated, “How’s that ?”

“Out,” said the umpire.

Andrews looked reproachfully at his bat, slapped it like an old-fashioned nurse reproofing a child, and bore it off amid applause to the pavilion.

Parkin seemed to get new life from this triumph. He walked on the grass with an unaccustomed spring. He charged down the bowling crease and loosed the ball with the vehemence of a man who, having got one wicket, believed that he could get

TEST MATCHES

two. Pellew was the victim of his Dionysiac inspiration. It was difficult to believe that he had hit the ball at all. But Woolley, crouching in the slips till his long figure was flat almost as a centipede's, had caught it; and Pellew made his way to the pavilion, pausing to show Douglas the corner of his bat and to point energetically to some object no bigger than a worm a little way down the pitch. No doubt that explained everything. Several of the fielders walked down the pitch and gazed down on the object sympathetically if gratefully.

The score was now 239 for five wickets, compared to the English score of 191 for five wickets on Monday.

Armstrong succeeded Pellew and got an ovation as compensation for the ill manners of Saturday. Armstrong is always either a hero or a villain. It is one of the penalties of personality.

He was hit on the leg by the very first ball, but, though he rubbed the place vigorously, he is much too huge a man with whom to sympathise.

Huge though he is, however, he is not too huge to run, as he showed when Taylor drove Parkin to the rails, with Sandham—an out-fielder of Australian pace—racing to cut off the ball. Sandham just managed to pounce on the ball before it reached the boundary, but Armstrong and Taylor had run their 4 all the same. Immediately afterwards, Sandham was off on another race to the boundary, as the long-headed Fender sent up a ball to Taylor with

THE SPORTING LIFE

a jerk of the forearm like Hearne's, and Taylor's bat flashed to greet it.

Hitch, who had been bowling at the Vauxhall end with much mopping of brow, now came on at the pavilion wicket, and, handing his blue cap to the umpire, set out on a series of those marvellous three-trip charges of his. He leaps into the air as he starts to run, rearranges his feet, runs, leaps again, runs again, and with the last leap hurls the ball. Taylor caught it on the point of his bat and sent it singing to the boundary.

There was a pause in the scoring when Woolley came on to bowl. He produced for a few moments a condition of stalemate in which neither could England get a wicket nor Australia a run. It was Douglas, moistening his fingers to get a grip on the ball, who ultimately bowled Armstrong. It was Douglas, too, who bowled the ball that Taylor struck out at and, flicking with the edge of his bat, sent into the hands of Woolley, who so seldom makes the sort of mistakes he made on Monday.

Seven wickets were now down for 291, as compared with seven wickets for 312 on the English side on Monday. But there was no Mead left to bat for the Australians.

Gregory and Oldfield were batting partners—Gregory of the gigantic bones and Oldfield who moves so trippingly, like a gently jumping frog.

Gregory began his innings with three fours, one of which was a race against Sandham, who was

TEST MATCHES

flying after the ball to the boundary, and who brilliantly overtook it, but in vain. With his third 4, Gregory took the Australian score beyond 300 before one o'clock, and, though Tennyson changed the bowling repeatedly, the runs went on slowly mounting up till lunch-time, when the Australians had scored 338 for the loss of seven wickets.

The game had by this time lost interest as a game, and had become mainly an exhibition. The batsmen relaxed and held social meetings with their enemies the bowlers. During a pause between overs, Oldfield discussed his bat with Douglas, and Douglas took it into his hands and held it experimentally in position. Gregory, on his way back to the crease, playfully swept Hitch's feet out of the path with his bat, and Hitch replied with a schoolboyish push.

The end no longer mattered. The fight was over. Cricket had ceased to be an excitement, and had become the recreation of a slumbrous August day.

XVI

SPORT

DURING the winter I let my house to an ex-officer's family. It is a house which consists almost entirely of books. There is very little in it, indeed, except books and windows. It is a madly indiscriminate collection of books—almost as mad as the library of the British Museum. There is a little of everything—from Aristotle down to *The Ten Best Card Games for Two*, from Achilles Tatius down to the sermons of “Woodbine Willie.” Between these extremes there is a considerable array of poets and novelists, from Fielding to Mr George Moore, from Homer to the post-Georgians.

One day the officer's wife met another lady, who asked her how she liked the house.

“My dear,” was the reply, “I have never been in such a house. There's simply nothing to read.”

“Oh,” said the other lady, “I thought there were almost too many books.”

“Books!” repeated the officer's wife, with a look of disgust; “do you know, I've looked all through the shelves, and there isn't a hunting novel in the HOUSE!”

The indictment is not absolutely fair. There is a

SPORT

copy of *Some Reminiscences of an Irish R.M.* on the shelves, though there is nothing about Mr Jorrocks. There is Mr Masefield's *Reynard the Fox*, which is fiction of a kind, though in verse. At the same time, generally speaking, I must plead guilty on behalf of my shelves. There is a lamentable deficiency of books about sport on them. Treatises on fly-fishing are as rare as Aztec grammars, and lives of cricketers are as difficult to discover as lives of clergymen.

There is a tattered and out-of-date copy of *Form at a Glance* lying about somewhere or other, but it would probably be easier to find half-a-dozen books dealing with the sports of South Sea Islanders than half-a-dozen dealing with the sports of Englishmen. Yet it is almost certain that games and sport play a far more important part in the life of the average Englishman than in the life of the average South Sea Islander.

Napoleon described the English as a nation of shopkeepers. He would have come nearer the truth if he had described them as a nation of goal-keepers. There has never been another nation which could to the same extent forget the vexations of life in the contemplation of a small ball or in the very rumour of a number of horses galloping in a bunch a hundred miles away.

Ancient Rome may have been as unanimous in its passion for gladiatorial combats, and Spain may be equally so in its intoxication with bull-fights.

THE SPORTING LIFE

But these are the amusements of spectators, not of players. The Englishman is both an eager spectator and an eager player.

The only great English game in which the average spectator does not take a player's part, at least in his daydreams, is horse-racing. Cricket, football, golf, hockey, tennis and rowing are no mere spectacles. They are the chief occupation of the greater part of the youth of the country outside business hours, and nearly everybody has at one time or another taken an active part in them.

They mean more to the general public than do the churches. They mean more, except at an occasional crisis, than politics.

There are thousands of people who care very little about saving the State, and a good deal less about saving their souls, who spent most of their evenings last summer angrily explaining how to save the situation in the rest of the Test Matches.

Their seriousness in the matter was delightful. I met a grey-haired man in gold-rimmed glasses after the Nottingham match. "It's a tragedy," he said, shaking his head—"nothing short of a tragedy." The word "disaster" could scarcely have been used more frequently if there had been an eruption of Etna destroying a hundred thousand people.

That is typical of the intensity with which games are being played and, as people say, "followed" all over England. The new evangel is the evangel of sport. I have heard it maintained that there

SPORT

were ten Englishmen who could have given you the names of the Australian players in England last year for one who could have given you the names of the Cabinet Ministers of the moment. The captain of the Australians was a real person to a far greater number of people than was the head of any of the English Churches.

There has probably never been a more varied orgy of sport in any country than has been witnessed in England during the past two years during May and June. There is the Derby ; there are the golf championships ; there is cricket ; there is the lawn tennis at Beckenham ; there is the polo at Hurlingham ; there is boxing somewhere else. It is as though men were attempting to forget all the hateful conflicts of recent times in the delightful conflicts of games. They have lived through the long winter of war and are celebrating a too-long delayed Easter.

Pessimists declare that all these games are funeral games—that what we are now spectators of are the funeral games of civilisation. It may be so. Optimists, on the other hand, declare that the universal revival of interest in sport is a fine thing, and that it is a sign of the essential health and soundness of those who remain alive. This, again, may be so. It is hardly open to question that the ideal of sportsmanship is a good ideal. It ennobles the human body. It is social. It is even moral. It implies not only the great virtues of determination and courage. It also implies the capacity to

THE SPORTING LIFE

accept defeat with smiling self-control. This, we may grant, is not implied in such a sport as the shooting of live pigeons or even the shooting of live pheasants. But the great popular sports do seem to give us better than anything else that "moral equivalent of war" that was demanded by William James.

Not that sport in itself is a preventive of war. The peoples most given to sport in the past have been the peoples most successful in war. Wellington declared that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton, and during the last war the English regiment that went into action in 1914 trundling an Association football was illustrative of the way in which Englishmen had prepared themselves for fighting by learning to shoot goals rather than by learning to shoot human beings.

Most of the soldiers, however, were anxious to get back to their games at the earliest possible moment. There was never a war in which so few of the fighters regarded war as itself the best of sports, as one gathers the early Mr Kipling did. The soldiers themselves were, for the most part, clear enough on this point: that it was infinitely more natural and infinitely more pleasant for men to play cricket than to kill each other.

Sir William Beach Thomas suggested last year that one of the causes of the insurrection in Ireland was the fact that young Irishmen do not play cricket and football. This expresses a character-

SPORT

istically English point of view. But Sir William was wrong in taking for granted that, because the Irish do not play cricket, they do not play games. As a matter of fact, especially in Munster, they are almost as enthusiastically addicted to games as Englishmen, and no one can see them playing hurling or Gaelic football without realising where they acquired the gifts that have made them famous as shock troops in war.

The Irish, like the English, public is a sporting public. Sinn Feiner and Orangemen alike delight in the rivalry of the horse race. A journalist arrived in a little town in the west of Ireland during the recent troubles, hoping to find the Sinn Fein Courts sitting, as he wished to describe one for his paper. He learned, however, that the sittings had been suspended as the judges themselves wished to attend a local race-meeting.

That also, I think, revealed a healthy and admirable spirit. It was a reminder that man is a social animal, and that, even under the threat of innumerable penalties, he feels that he has a natural claim to happiness among his fellows. Horse races are obviously not a substitute for justice, but there is a good deal to be said for a mingling of justice with horse races, and I doubt whether the House of Commons shows any signs of moral improvement since it ceased to adjourn for the Derby. Members of Parliament might be very much worse employed than in attending the Derby. They usually are.

THE SPORTING LIFE

At the same time there is need for balance in all things, and it is just as possible to have too much sport as to have too much literature. It is a waste of time to read too many novels, and it is a waste of time to read too many sporting papers.

There are two daily papers published in England which are devoted entirely to sport, and which, though they cost twopence a copy, are read assiduously by thousands of persons who never even glance at the Parliamentary debates. Probably, however, these papers owe most of their readers, as the financial papers do, to the love of money rather than to the love of sport. The interest of the bet is greater than the interest of the race.

That is the weakness of horse-racing as a sport. Not that I agree with the Puritanical case against betting. It seems to me that to lay a bet that one can easily afford to lay is a perfectly legitimate amusement. On the other hand, to dream of making money by betting, as so many men do, and to take it so seriously as to neglect for its sake Shakespeare and one's wife and children, is the folly of follies. Betting of this absorbing kind is what the vulgar call "a mug's game." The Lancashire bookmaker who, on his retirement, built a row of houses out of his earnings and called it Mugs' Row was a true critic of the fellow-creatures out of whom he had made his fortune.

But it is possible to be excessively absorbed even in those sports that make no appeal to avarice.

SPORT

Sport is a pastime, not the chief end of man, and it is not nearly so glorious a sign as many people have contended that, in a world that needs to be reconstructed all round, tens of thousands of people are utterly indifferent to any sort of reconstruction but the reconstruction of English cricket. Mr Douglas, the English captain in the first Test Matches, was subjected to a far fiercer fire of criticism in many an English home than Mr Lloyd George, the English Prime Minister. A Chancellor of the Exchequer can fumble incompetently with a million pounds amid general apathy, while a fielder who fumbles with the ball becomes the object of "barracking."

Hence one has a vague hope that the keenness with which sport is at present being followed will gradually be extended to other forms of human activity. The Apostle Paul attempted to introduce the excitement of a race into the religious life, and it would be well if men dreamed as enthusiastically about goals in politics as about goals in football. The present political world is like a football field in which there are no goal-posts, and in which the chief player has hidden the ball under his jersey. It will not be long, many people hope, till the spectators indignantly demand the return of their money.

XVII

BUS TICKETS

I FOUND a little girl sitting with an extremely laborious air at a table laden with bus and tram tickets. She had an account-book on the table, and she took up one ticket after another, looked at the letters on it, and made a note of its value, its alphabetical denomination, its colour, and how many copies she possessed, in the book.

She had already filled pages with lists that read like this :

<i>s. d.</i>
1½ Az. flesh 1
Cz. flesh 1
Uk. white 2
Qh. orange-and-white 1
Vv. orange-and-white 1
2 Fg. blue 1
Pb. blue-red 1
Vd. white-red 4
Vq. white 1

I inquired into her object in wasting her time on such ridiculous trifles, for it seemed to me the sort of thing great business men, rather than little

BUS TICKETS

children, do. Unhappily, she could give me no rational explanation of her amusement. She merely laughed as she went on with her work, and said: "Oh, it's lovely!" Possibly, a business man would give more or less the same answer if you asked him to explain a row of his ledgers. The ledger, no doubt, is the business man's alternative to collecting butterflies.

There was another thing that puzzled me, however, in the little girl's catalogue of bus tickets.

You will have noticed that, though she has made a scrupulous record of the letters at the top of each ticket, she has ignored the numbers. This was to my mind a grave flaw, because the first thing I read on a bus ticket is the number. I am what some people would call superstitious about numbers. If I see Am1001 on my ticket I feel, "That's all right." If I see Fj2933 I have a touch of gloom, and meditate on possible catastrophes. If I see Xq9018 I brighten up as at a stroke of good luck, and should not be surprised on reaching home to find a cheque or a friend dropped in to tea. You may, as other people do, call this superstitious, but that is probably because you believe in picking up pins instead of in numbers. There is a good deal to be said for pins, but I have always looked on them as common.

I cross-examined the child rather keenly as to her reasons for taking so extraordinary a step as to leave out the numbers, which may at least be made

THE SPORTING LIFE

to mean something, and to leave in the letters, which mean absolutely nothing.

"Oh," she replied, "the numbers don't mean anything. The letters are the names of the tickets."

"But how," I demanded, "can they be names if they don't spell anything?"

"But they do," she said.

"What does this spell?" I asked her, taking up a flesh-coloured ticket called "Cz."

She made a noise rather like a wasp—well, it was as much like a wasp as like a serpent.

"And this one?" I continued, pointing to orange-and-white "Qh."

She imitated a duck that had had its vocal chords removed.

As for the blue "Fg," it wasn't exactly "Ifg," and it wasn't exactly "Fig," and it wasn't exactly "Fgih." To hear its name pronounced was to have an eerie feeling as though one were approaching some curious borderland—as though one might at any moment utter the keyword that would precipitate one into the world of the fourth dimension. When it came to "Zw," not only did I dislike the queer colour of the ticket, but I shrank from asking the pronunciation of its name. I do not dabble in the Black Art.

Still, the conversation with the child was not, as Wordsworth would have said, without its uses. It taught me—what I had never realised before—that

BUS TICKETS

even a bus ticket has a personality, and can be called by a name, which is the beginning of poetry.

The British Museum should take the earliest possible steps to get hold of this small girl's catalogue. It is in all probability the fullest catalogue of twentieth-century bus and tram tickets extant.

XVIII

I AM TAKEN FOR A PICKPOCKET

PISA. . . . You probably have a vision of a leaning tower—a queer tower tilted like a wedding-cake with which a tipsy best man has collided. I have known men become seasick at sight of the leaning tower. . . .

But, perhaps, I am prejudiced against Pisa. When you are threatened with arrest as a pickpocket by policemen dressed up to the ears in rifles and revolvers you need to be a philosopher indeed to dwell appreciatively on the beauty of a leaning tower. I confess I am neither a philosopher nor a pickpocket. I live in a sort of neutral zone between the two. I could have forgiven the Pisan police if they had mistaken me for a philosopher. To mistake me for a pickpocket was stupid. I am not well enough dressed for a pickpocket.

This is how it happened. There was a wild mob of pilgrims rushing along the platform in one direction to catch the train for Rome. There was another wild mob, consisting largely of myself and four heavy bags, rushing in the opposite direction to catch the train for Florence. One of the friends with whom I was travelling—an extremely respect-

I AM TAKEN FOR A PICKPOCKET

able man with money and a beard—had fought his way ahead of me till he reached the steps of the train. I was close on his heels going up the steps when a large, fat dandy charged me with his shoulder and took my place in the procession.

I mounted the steps slowly, bag by bag, only to find that the carriage was full. There was a longish corridor, however, connecting it with the next carriage, and I saw that my friend had passed along this and was standing at the far end of it. I set down my bags and remained in the corridor.

A moment later, on looking in his direction, I noticed that he was feeling in his breast-pocket with the agitated air of a man who has lost something. An Italian standing by him noticed it, too, spoke to him, got an answer, flung down the window, and howled for the police. Then the hurricane fell. Policemen dashed into the train with excited eyes. Civilians followed with excited cries. They rushed up to my friend and stood clamouring before him like the Tower of Babel rocking in an earthquake. I alone remained in the corridor guarding the four bags.

I do not know what questions the policemen asked. They must have asked my friend either where he had been robbed or by whom he had been robbed. The next thing of which I was aware was that he was pointing his arm vigorously down the corridor, of which I was the only occupant. I may say, in order to spare his feelings, that he is a little

THE SPORTING LIFE

short-sighted, and probably did not know that I was standing there.

His gesture was enough for the police. They came over to me, glared into my face, and, one after the other, yelled “*Descendi!*” at me, gesticulating towards the platform. I was—well, “taken aback” is too mild a phrase. I instantly became speechless in six languages. The police had revolvers at their belts, and a command of Italian. I had no revolver, and practically all the Italian I knew was a line from Dante, meaning “*Abandon hope, all ye who enter here,*” a remark of Galileo’s about the movement of the earth, and “*dolce far niente.*”

To have said any of these things would only have infuriated the police, and anyhow I could remember none of them in the suddenness of the attack. Once more the terrible strangled duet was repeated, “*Descendi.*” And all I could do was to stand where I was in helpless silence. Not that I was frightened. I was far too busy trying to remember the Italian for “friend.” Ultimately, just as the police seemed on the point of becoming inarticulate in their attempts to order me off the train—to what dark cell I knew not—I recovered two words of French, two of Irish, two of English, and one of Italian, and slowly uttered the sentence, “*Je suis cara leis the other gentiluomo*” (I am the other man’s friend).

That gave them pause. They felt instinctively that no pickpocket could have talked such gibberish. There were mutters of interrogation among the

I AM TAKEN FOR A PICKPOCKET

crowd, some saying that I was an Englishman, and others that I was a Czecho-Slovak. My words had certainly a calming effect on the police, till someone said: "Inglese?" and I replied: "Non, Irlandese," at which one of the policemen darted such a look of suspicion at me that I felt sure the arrest was coming at last.

He stayed on the train as far as Empoli, and every now and then, as I was looking out dreamily at the cypress-covered hills, I would be startled with a tap on my shoulder and a question in Italian that sounded like "Whose wife are you?" or "Have you seen the gardener's penknife?" Not having my phrase-book about me, I always answered: "Si, si. . . ."

Ah, yes, romantic people may think of Pisa as the place with the leaning tower! But my friend remembers it only as a place where he was robbed of a thousand lire, and I as the railway junction in which the police wanted to run me in as a pickpocket.

XIX

THE NEW HALF-CROWN

THE only thing to be said in favour of the new half-crown is that it is worth sixpence more than the new two-shilling piece. If, indeed, either of them is worth anything. When I passed one at a tobacconist's on the first day of their issue, I should have been only half-surprised if the police had been sent for.

The new half-crown looks too good to be true. It has the look of shining innocence you see on the face of a small boy who is telling lies. It was once said of somebody that he looked more like a gentleman than a gentleman ought to look, and that he dressed more like a gentleman than a gentleman ought to dress. That is the mistake of the new half-crown. It looks more like a half-crown than a half-crown ought to look.

It is said that it will buy as much as the old half-crown, and one hopes for the best. But one was told the same thing about paper money. People who hoarded gold in the early days of the war were not only denounced as unpatriotic, but laughed at as fools. But, whatever may be thought of his patriotism, the man who was faithful to his gold has

THE NEW HALF-CROWN

the laugh on his side now. The pound of gold is worth more than the pound of paper as surely as a pound of lead is heavier than a pound of feathers, or is it the other way about? One knew these things thirty years ago.

It seems to me that something should be done to redress the balance in favour of those who did not hoard.

I, for one, have never hoarded gold. Even before the war, I would rather have lost a sovereign, or even given it in charity, than not have got rid of it somehow or other.

But now I am at a disadvantage compared with the man who secreted sovereigns. The paper pound is a liar. It is not a pound at all. It is a partially dishonoured cheque.

If I were Chancellor of the Exchequer I would have all these paper notes withdrawn and reissued with the real value stamped on them as on the new railway tickets. It might not be a bad thing to do the same with the silver and copper coinage. Why not call the new half-crown a shilling, and the new shilling fourpence-halfpenny? It would solve a number of economic difficulties, and would prevent employers from fancying that they were ruining themselves by paying enormous wages.

This, however, is more than we can reasonably hope for. Under Coalition Government you are lucky to get even an imitation half-crown. You are lucky not to get a bad half-crown. The ideal of a

THE SPORTING LIFE

Coalition is to produce something that is neither gold nor silver, but that has the deceptive sheen of cheap jewellery—a coin that is neither base nor true, but will pass.

Mr Pinchbeck, of Clerkenwell, was its father. It is said that, when Mr Pinchbeck invented his famous imitation gold, the jewellers were unable for a time to sell any real gold watches. But, alas for Mr Pinchbeck, the world ultimately gets back to the taste for realities, and all he had to give it was an imitation and an adjective!

I hope the Coalition will give it as much as an adjective. It has certainly given us the imitation. I have it in my pocket. What am I to do with it? Anyone can have it for the worth—in bitter beer—of a pre-war shilling.

XX

MY HAT

THERE are several things to be said about my hat. First of all it is not a top-hat.

I have worn a top-hat only on two occasions, and then I had to borrow it from a man whose head was smaller than my own.

I wore it the first time for the sake of a friend who was being married, and who, having boasted all his life of being the most disreputably dressed man in Europe, became anxious at the last moment that his equally disreputable friends should do him credit in the church, and should look as respectable, if not as men of fashion, at least as mutes at a funeral.

I still owe him a grudge for insisting on the top-hat.

It sat on my head not exactly like the leaning tower of Pisa, for the leaning tower of Pisa takes up one position and maintains the same angle against all the winds that blow. This extraordinary hat assumed a fresh position at the breeze from the wings of every passing fly.

It slid about my head like a goose on ice. Though there was no wind blowing, it dipped and rocked like

THE SPORTING LIFE

a ship in a heavy sea every time either I or the cab horse moved.

Eventually, as I was getting out of the hansom at the church door, it made a supreme effort and glided down over my forehead, coming to rest in an uneasy position over my left eye.

I am afraid I did not make a good impression on the bride's relatives. I comfort myself with the reflection, however, that just then I did not, at least, look like a mute at a funeral.

But there is no such thing as a tolerable hat. Not, at least, among new hats. Every hat is born ugly. It looks as though it had been designed by a plumber.

Experience alone can subdue it to the tinge of a nightingale's wing, the crumpled appearance of an autumn chestnut leaf, the battered look of a thing that has lived not wisely but too well.

Many years ago when I bought a new hat I used always to hope for rain, and nothing pleased me better than to go for a walk in a downpour that would reduce it to a ruin in twenty minutes.

If anyone accidentally knocked my hat off a peg in a restaurant, and kicked it along the floor, instead of listening to his apologies I thanked him courteously. If it flew off in the street, and bus horses passed over it, other people might laugh, but I laughed more triumphantly than they.

I shall never forget my glow of pride when one day in a restaurant an actor whom I did not know

MY HAT

came up to me and said with awe in his voice :
“ Where did you get that hat ? ”

He asked me to sell him my hat. He said that he had been round all the hatshops of London, but that he had not been able to find anything even distantly resembling it.

It was not that he had any ambition to wear it, he admitted, but he had a part in a new play at His Majesty's, and his success depended entirely on his being able to get the right hat.

I sent it to him the next day by post, and, a fortnight later, my hat made its first appearance on the stage of a West End theatre. My feelings of gratification were not unmixed when I discovered that the character who wore it like a symbol was an artist who was not only consumptive, but had the loosest possible morals, if he could be said to have any morals at all. Since then I have been much more particular about what happens to my old hats. . . .

Let me assure those who envy me, however, that you have not to spoil the shape of your hat deliberately in order to make it wearable. If you are one of those good-natured people who automatically assess themselves too high on income-tax forms your hat will assume a careless air of beggary a fortnight after you have purchased it. If, on the other hand, you are one of those quiet, cautious people who habitually cheat the Income Tax Commissioners a bowler hat will last you five

THE SPORTING LIFE

years, and will still look respectable at the end of it.

The hat is a great revealer of character. If I were a phrenologist I should look not at a man's bumps, but at his hat. . . .

All this is merely to lead up to the fact that I am about to buy a new hat. Shall it be a bowler? Just for this once?

XXI

EATING

SHE was quite young. She was as charming as a spring day—a creature of gold and blue. She was, I think, newly married. She was sitting opposite a young man in a restaurant car on a train going North. They were waiting for luncheon to come, and she talked in a loud, ringing voice, either to drown the noise of the wheels or because he was a little deaf.

She took up the menu and cast her eye down it.

“The lunch looks good,” she remarked, in a voice that sailed right down the car. And, when the young man mumbled something, as if he had not heard, she repeated in a louder voice: “I say the lunch looks quite good.”

He mumbled something again.

“I enjoyed dinner last night,” she confided to him in the same robust tones; “didn’t you?”

More mumbling.

“The boiled salmon,” she megaphoned to him, “was excellent.”

The waiter came along with a plate of fish in every crook of his arm, and set two plates before them.

“I’m glad it’s turbot,” she shouted to the young

THE SPORTING LIFE

man. "If you don't count salmon, turbot's my favourite fish. What's yours?"

His reply was inaudible. Everything, indeed—even the train—everything except what the young lady said—was inaudible.

She took up a roll and broke it in her hands.

"The rolls are quite nice," she called across. "I like them like this—not too fresh, and crisp without being stale."

A meat dish followed. She cut off a little corner of beef and chewed it thoughtfully for a few moments. She gave a little nod of commendation.

"The beef is excellent," her comment rang out. "Do you like horse-radish with roast beef? Or don't you? I don't. I hate it."

She smiled genially at her little peculiarity.

Then, becoming serious again, she shouted across the table: "What do you think of the cabbage?"

I don't know what he answered. She didn't give him much time to answer, but went on:

"Did you like those beans last night? I always like beans. Except when they're stringy. Do you like broad beans or French beans best? I like broad beans. I think I like nearly any vegetable. Except vegetable marrow. It gets so soppy."

I thought this was all she was going to say about the second course, but her voice pealed out again:

"You've taken very few potatoes. Aren't you fond of them? I am. Especially when they're nice and floury. Like these."

EATING

The train entered a tunnel just as the apple-tart came round, and made such an uproar that the greater part of her commentary on the sweets was inaudible. But, as we emerged from the tunnel, the first human sound I heard was a woman's shriek : "This—pastry's—delicious."

I felt by this time that either the lady was labouring under a very serious delusion, or I was. The meal seemed to me to be a very ding-dong affair —the sort of meal one works one's way through, and the less said about it the better. When the waiter came round with the biscuits and cheese I chose the most attractive of the biscuits in order to put as pleasant an end as possible to an indifferent luncheon.

The waiter passed on to where the lady sat.

She looked through the various biscuits, and sang out to the young man :

" Halloa ! Digestive biscuits ! Are you fond of digestive biscuits ? I am. There's only one left. Won't you have it ? Then I will. If you had said 'Yes,' I honestly think I would have murdered you."

Alas ! I was beginning to be able to foretell the conversation.

She boomed : "The cheese is good."

She boomed : "The coffee is excellent."

She signalled to the waiter a few minutes later, and he came up to her.

" Waiter," she said confidentially, in a voice that

THE SPORTING LIFE

would have filled Drury Lane, “the food on this train is awfully good.”

He grimaced, wrinkled his face appreciatively, and went about his business.

She leaned across the table and shouted to the young man :

“ I was saying to the waiter that the food on this train is awfully good.”

The young man grinned vacuously and nodded.

She subsided in her chair and closed her eyes for a few minutes. Then she half-opened them again and murmured across the table like the wind in a cave :

“ Do you remember the *pêche Melba* last night ? I never can make up my mind which is my real favourite—*pêche Melba* or meringues. Can you ? I think *pêche Melba*.”

Her eyes closed again. She slept. And, as she slept, she had the face of a child—a nice greedy child.

XXII

ON WEARING A COLLAR

WHEN I was in the House of Lords for the opening of Parliament by the King I was given a double sheet of fair white foolscap, beautifully printed, setting out the details of the ceremonial.

It was evidently meant to be a guide for Peers, and it ended with the sentences :

“The Knights of the several Orders are to wear their respective Collars.

“Full dress with trousers.”

It seemed to me odd that Peers should need such a reminder, absent-minded though several of them—like the late Duke of Devonshire—have been.

I should not have been surprised, on the other hand, if the Lord Chamberlain, in sending me a card of admission, had enclosed a little note, marked “Private,” begging me not to forget my collar or trousers or both.

For one thing, I have no valet, and a man without a valet is rather helpless. There are so many things to remember—shaving-brush, tooth-brush,

THE SPORTING LIFE

bath, vest, shirt, pants, trousers, waistcoat, coat, collar, tie, studs, links, hair-brush, clothes-brush, boots, hat—but the list is endless. It is amazing that accidents do not happen more often.

A few days ago I succeeded in remembering the shaving-brush, and spent several minutes producing a really beautiful lather according to the directions on the paper wrapped round the soap. Having done this, however, I forgot to shave, and it was only when I was in the bath, and the lather half washed off, that I realised what an absent-minded fool I was. Could a Peer have done worse?

As for the clothes-brush, I have, in the American phrase, no use for it. It seems to me to be asking too much of human nature to expect a busy man to be constantly thinking about the most useless article in any civilised household. Besides, it is perfectly easy to get clothes of a colour and pattern that more or less absorb the dust. To brush clothes like mine would be so superfluous as to be merely the hobby of vain and idle men.

Oddly enough—if the grammarians will allow the phrase—I do not remember ever to have forgotten to wear a collar, except deliberately. That was when I was nominally a student and shortly after I had become a passionate advocate of democracy. I do not know why at the age of eighteen it should seem democratic to wear a neck-cloth instead of a collar, and a corduroy cap, and to smoke plug tobacco in a clay pipe with the red hand of Ulster embossed

ON WEARING A COLLAR

on the bowl. It was certainly a dubious advertisement for Socialism, and merely served to convince anyone who took notice that one's creed was the result of mental disorder.

I remember also making it a point never to shave on Sundays. It seemed to me monstrous that the middle classes should all look so extremely respectable on Sunday that no one who was not equally respectable would dare to be seen in the same church with them. Hence, I decided to make my tiny contribution to the brotherhood of man by reducing the respectability of the church I attended so far as was in my power. I could think only of two ways—to turn up late, and to turn up unshaved. I carried out my programme with all the greater ardour because I detested early rising on any day, and particularly on Sunday, and as for shaving, even now, if there were any alternative to it except growing a beard, I should never let a razor into the house.

Times have changed, however, and I with them. You will no longer see me on a Sunday morning standing up in the back pew, looking like a long, cadaverous gaol-bird who has just recovered from a wasting illness in a Bolshevik hospital.

It may be that I discovered that, in order to look disreputable, I had no need to put myself about. Even my best efforts would lower the tone of any religious gathering ever held in these islands.

I undoubtedly cut a sorry figure among all those

THE SPORTING LIFE

peers in their scarlet robes and peeresses in their jewels.

Even to be among them, however, reminded me somehow of my lost youth. I suppose it was the reference to collars. I, too, have lived in Arcadia.

XXIII

ON BEING SHY

I AM naturally shy. I should never dare to ride a pig down Park Lane, as Lord Charles Beresford did. I should feel that people were looking. The presence of a single housemaid would unnerve me.

But even that does not give the full measure of my shyness. I cannot sit on a char-à-banc and sing or blow a trumpet or wave a flag without feeling self-conscious. Not, at least, while passing through a village. I feel that the eyes of every villager, from the crooked old man of ninety down to the baby dropping its india-rubber doll over the side of the perambulator, are concentrated on me with a burning-glass intensity. As for dancing in the street to a mouth-organ during a halt outside an inn, I simply cannot do it.

Not that I do not see all the arguments on the other side. I say to myself: "What does it matter if people see you—people who don't know you and who wouldn't like you if they did—people for whom you did not exist yesterday and for whom you will not exist to-morrow? You are a gross egotist to behave as though you were the supreme interest of their lives."

THE SPORTING LIFE

But it is no use. Man is not a reasonable animal. At least, I am not.

I felt this acutely in Rome when I had to throw a penny into the Trevi Fountain. "Had to" is perhaps a rather strong expression, but everybody tells you that, if you go to Rome, you must throw money into the Trevi Fountain if you want to be sure of coming back again.

I was with a friend who is superstitious in these matters. On our last evening in Rome, with only a short time left to catch the train, he suddenly exclaimed: "Good heavens! we have forgotten to throw anything into the fountain."

I am not superstitious, but I confess my heart sank, because I wanted to return to Rome.

I had resigned myself to destiny, however, when he seized me by the arm and, with set face, said: "We must have a taxi."

He is a man of musical culture, and, as we jumped into the taxi, he called out to the driver: "Prestissimo!" "Prestissimo" in Rome means: "Drive on as many sides of the street as you like. Spare the children if you can, but you may run over older people within reason. Anyhow, get there as quickly as possible."

It was a terrible experience, but we got there.

My friend at once leaped out of the taxi, stepped lightly down the steps to the fountain, and threw his money into the water.

As for me, my blood froze when I saw what I had

ON BEING SHY

let myself in for. I had not realised that there is always a crowd of people at the fountain—old women taking a rest, children playing, soldiers smoking, persons of all sorts gossiping—and that it is all but impossible to throw a penny into the water unobserved. Never before did I feel such exasperation at the spectacle of idle humanity. Half Rome seemed to be there. It made one's small act of homage as public a performance as a music-hall turn.

“Hurry up!” said my friend.

My hand was in my pocket, clutching a penny, but I positively could not take it out before so many people.

I surveyed the statuary of the fountain with a pretence at archaeological interest.

“Don’t be a coward,” he said; “the taxi’s ticking up lire while you’re making up your mind.”

I would gladly have disowned him. I crept slowly nearer the water, my gaze still fixed on the statues. When I reached the water’s edge, I leaned over and looked into it, my heart going pit-a-pat with excitement. I did not yet dare to throw in the penny.

“We’ll miss the train,” said my friend impatiently; “get it over.”

I turned away from the fountain as though I had seen all I wanted to see. I did my best to look cool, but I was trembling with stage fright. Just as I turned to go, however, I made a dexterous pass with my hand, pretended to be brushing something

THE SPORTING LIFE

off my coat, and with shaking fingers juggled the coin into the water.

As I walked up the steps to the taxi, I felt as small as a schoolboy who has made a fool of himself in public and knows it. It could not have been a more trying ordeal if people had been watching me through opera-glasses from all the surrounding windows. Yet there was no comment, no applause, no booing. I doubt if a single person had taken the slightest notice of me.

“Prestissimo!” said my friend to the driver again.

I did not feel safe till we got to the station. The driver saw to that.

XXIV

A SMALL BOY'S APPETITE

I AM relieved that the heat-wave has broken. I dislike great heat because of its effect on chocolate biscuits. It makes them melt in the hand. When the hand happens to belong to a small boy put into one's charge for a long railway journey, the results are so appalling that one has to go for a parallel to the leopard that could not change his spots and the Ethiopian who found it equally impossible to change his skin.

His mother said to me: "You're sure you don't mind? It's so good of you. He'll be met at the station. Johnny darling, this kind gentleman will keep you safe. I've brought these few biscuits in case he feels hungry." And she thrust into my hands—nay, into my arms—a large paper bag containing a pound of chocolate biscuits.

The air in the carriage was so stifling that fat men looked like pieces of lard slowly melting away on frying-pans. We were sitting five a side, divided between hatred of the blazing afternoon sun and hatred of each other. We fanned ourselves with the evening papers which we were too feeble to read. It was an atmosphere in which the sight of anything

THE SPORTING LIFE

sweet, even of a lump of sugar, would have affected you like a rough cross-Channel passage.

The train had hardly left the station when the little chap looked up at me with a broad face beaming with appetite and said : "I'm hungry."

I am not accustomed to children in railway trains, so I said : "Don't you think . . . ? Would your mother . . . ? Better keep the biscuits, don't you think, till we get past Clapham Junction."

His face, which had been broad, suddenly became long, and it came over me with horror that he might begin to cry.

"Well," said I, holding out the bag to him, "just one."

He drew out a long brown finger-shaped biscuit, and as he gripped it in his little hot hand and began munching it his face reverted from a crescent to a full moon.

I fought for his soul, biscuit by biscuit, for the first thirty miles of the journey. But it was no use. Always he elongated his face, and always in the end he took the biscuit. He ate them of all shapes and sizes. You might as well have attempted to stay the appetite of a young cuckoo. He ate them with both hands. He ate them with all parts of his face —with his mouth, with his ears, and with the parts of his cheeks just under his eyes. His face was one large palette of chocolate stains up to the roots of his hair. After the first twenty miles of the journey it would have been impossible to tell to what nation-

A SMALL BOY'S APPETITE

ality he belonged. He looked like a mulatto who had been adopted into the family of a stoker.

When he had eaten something like the equivalent of his own bulk in chocolate biscuits, he lay back in the seat and held up his ten fingers and looked at them, beaming as broadly as if he were ready to burst. They were certainly well worth looking at. There were still little bits of white skin showing, but for the rest they were as if gloved in a thick, clammy, chocolate mud.

"Where shall I wipe them?" he said.

I asked him if he had not a handkerchief, but he hadn't. I was keeping mine for mopping my brow, and had no mind to have daubs of brown paint all over my face. I looked down at his white socks, thought kindly of his mother, and steeled my heart.

"Wipe them on your socks," I said.

He did. At least he got rid of some of it on his socks. They became piebald.

He leaned back again and closed his eyes, looking rather pale.

"Oh, I've such a headache," he said, beginning to breathe, I thought, rather heavily. "Oh," he groaned, "I'd like to be at the window."

"Hurry," I told him, helping him to the floor; "go to the window and put your head out. The draught will do you good."

He felt his way to the window, laying his little sticky hand on every trouser-leg he passed, while each passenger in turn withdrew his knee hurriedly

THE SPORTING LIFE

and scowled at me in the belief that I was the child's father.

It is a curiously difficult thing to explain to a whole railway-carriageful of people that a child is no more your child than theirs ; anyhow I could not have spoken for a wild longing to laugh as I watched the little fellow making his way along that corridor of horrified and shrinking knees.

Then the old gentleman in the window-seat looked at me indignantly over his spectacles and said : "Is he going to be sick ? Better change places with me, so that you can look after him."

I am afraid I rather lost my head during the next ten miles. At one minute I would persuade the child to lean well out of the window, in the hope that the breeze would do him good. The next I would feel frightened at the thought of his getting a large, blinding cinder in his eye, and would pull him back into the carriage again. Luckily, when I had done these things alternately for close on half-an-hour the treatment proved effective, for he looked up into my face and said : "I'm feeling better now."

He sat back on the seat for a minute, then he leaned forward and screwed his head round to look up at what was left of the bag and the biscuits in the rack. The broad beam broke over his countenance ga in.

"I'm hungry," he said, gazing up at me.

XXV

HAMPSTEADOPHOBIA

HAMPSTEADOPHOBIA is a disease common among taxi-drivers. The symptoms are practically unmistakable, though to a careless eye somewhat resembling those of apoplexy.

At mention of the word "Hampstead" the driver affected gives a start, and stares at you with a look of the utmost horror. Slowly the blood begins to mount to his head, swelling first his neck and then distorting his features to twice their natural size.

His veins stand out on his temples like bunches of purple grapes. His eyes bulge and blaze in their sockets. At first, for just a fraction of a second, the power of speech deserts him, and one realises that he is struggling for utterance only because of the slight foam that has formed on his lips.

As one catches the first words of his returning speech, it is borne in upon one that he is praying. One cannot make out from the language of his prayers whether he is a Christian or a devil-worshipper or a plain heathen. It is clear that he holds strong religious views of some kind, but he seems to be as promiscuous in his worship as an ancient Greek. What is still more curious, he

THE SPORTING LIFE

seems to pray again and again and again for blindness.

I have often been puzzled as to the explanation of this. Is there some legend among taxi-drivers about a loathsome monster that lurks in the deeps of the Leg of Mutton Pond, and the mere sight of which causes madness in men of this particular calling ? Or is their terror the result of some old story of a taxi-driver who once took a fare to Hampstead late at night and was never heard of again ? Or is it guilty conscience that is at the back of it all ?

It may, for all I know, be recorded somewhere in history that the taxi-drivers once did a great wrong to the people of Hampstead—perhaps there was an invasion and an attempt to destroy the steep and beautiful hill—and are afraid to go there because of the vengeance of the inhabitants.

It is certainly a remarkable fact that while men of all other professions visit Hampstead in perfect security as a holiday resort, the taxi-drivers alone shrink from it as though it were a suburb of Gehenna. Do they expect the Spaniard to leap out on them with a knife, or the Bull to plunge forth snorting and fire-breathing from behind the Bush ? No taxi-driver has ever told. I doubt whether anyone could extract the truth but a psycho-analyst.

Something, however, ought to be done. I cannot believe that among taxi-drivers the disease of Hampsteadophobia is inevitable. I am confident that taxi-drivers could be trained in such a way as

HAMPSTEADOPHOBIA

to make them as little afraid of the name of Hampstead as a horse is nowadays of a steam-roller.

They might be accustomed to the sound of the dreaded name little by little. It would take a year, probably, to teach them not to start at the first whisper of the letter "H." During the second year they could proceed from "Ha" to "Ham" and, with luck, even to "Hamp." By the end of the third year, if a man stealing up behind one of them in goloshes and barking into the right ear the complete word "Hampstead"—if they were able to endure this without the quiver of an eyelid or any invocation of supernatural aid, they might then be regarded as proof against the disease, and be given their licences as taxi-drivers.

If something of this kind is not done, the disease will inevitably spread, and the taxi-drivers at railway stations will have to be put into muzzles.

XXVI

RETURNING FROM A HOLIDAY

THREE is no one who hates work more bitterly than an Englishman. Travelling back to London in the train after the Easter holiday, one sees hardly a cheerful face. The trains are crowded with men and women looking like valentudinarians in a specialist's waiting-room. They read their papers with the air of people reading bad news. Beards droop listlessly. Earrings hang like 116-lb. weights. Everybody sits disconsolately amid a chaos of luggage and extra passengers like a wretched man rescued from a wreck and with no certain destination but an iceberg.

They are obviously all confirmed haters of work. They remember, perhaps, that it was Adam's punishment when he was driven out of Eden. They are themselves still hankering after Eden, where nobody had ever any work to do. Shakespeare, in describing England as "this other Eden," had probably in mind the national propensity to idleness. There is no other nation that will spend three days from noon till eve at a cricket match. There is no other nation that to the same extent flocks to the race-course and the football field on the working days of

RETURNING FROM A HOLIDAY

the week. Napoleon called the English a nation of shopkeepers. It was the mistake of his life, and cost him his Empire. The English are a nation of playboys who grudge every day that they cannot turn into a holiday.

In order to see people who really enjoy working, you have to go abroad to some such country as France or Ireland. A Frenchwoman will polish a brass knocker or scrub a floor as cheerfully as a lark squandering music. Her work is a bubbling song that begins long before one is up and goes on, if necessary, till long after one has gone to bed.

In the same way, the Irish navvy carries a weight like a joke and pickaxes a road as though he had found a new sort of amusement. That is why the French and the Irish do not succeed in the world as the English do. They take work too lightly.

In order to succeed in life it is necessary to take work with the utmost seriousness. One must hate one's job and make it one's object in life to have done with it. One must grudge every moment spent on it, and save money assiduously in order to be able to retire and live in perpetual idleness.

Englishmen have for centuries idealised the man who does no work to such a point that until lately they thought no one else fit to be a Cabinet Minister. When an Englishman is totally incapable of doing any work whatsoever, he describes himself in the Income-Tax form as a "gentleman." The manufacture of gentlemen is the English national industry.

THE SPORTING LIFE

The gentleman is a person who regards work as a vice with such conviction that he denounces almost anyone who labours with his hands as a Bolshevik. He preaches about the dignity of labour, not to his fellow-clubmen, but to savages who are fit for nothing else.

I cannot help sympathising with the Englishman's hatred of work. If he liked working, he might have remained as cheerfully poor as a Donegal peasant. Instead of this, he grumbled, he struck, he became a sportsman, he invented bank holidays. England is the mother-country of strikes and bank holidays —those passionate protests against Adam's curse.

At the present moment the great argument of the English upper classes against Bolshevism is that under it everybody is compelled by law to work. It is not that Englishmen do not work when they have to. They work all the better, perhaps, because they wish to get done with it, just as they fight all the better because they wish to get done with it. "I want to go home" is their song in the workshop as in war.

That grim desire to go home, instead of enjoying themselves toiling and fighting like other races, is the secret of England's greatness. The Englishman surpasses all other white men in the punctuality with which he leaves off working.

XXVII

JOAN BUBBLE MAKES HER FORTUNE

JOAN BUBBLE was a telephone girl who could not trill the letter "r."

Not only could she not say "Thr-r-ree double thr-r-ee thr-r-ee"; she could not even say "Thr-r-ree double thr-r-ree."

She had a lisp, and said "Thwee double thwee." It was a mystery to everybody how she had risen to her position.

* * *

Sir Hector M'Whuffle was a lovable old City merchant, a tapioca importer, who had voted for Sir Frederick Banbury all his life.

He was old and pink and bald, and was universally believed to be of Scottish extraction. Nevertheless, he was not happy.

It seemed as if the tapioca had entered into his soul. He had few pleasures left. Indeed he had only two. It would be more accurate to say that he had only one.

Every morning, on arriving at his office, he would pass into his private room, lock the door, walk briskly to the telephone, take up the receiver and ask for the number "Three double three three." Sometimes he would ask for "Mayfair 3333," and

THE SPORTING LIFE

sometimes for "Hop 3333," but, whatever the exchange, the number he asked for was invariably "Three double three three."

He did not know to whom any of these numbers belonged, and he did not care. His one remaining joy in life was to listen to the echo of his words coming back over the wire, pronounced as if by a nightingale, "Thr-r-rec double thr-r-ree thr-r-ree." It thrilled him.

On being put through he always inquired in a courteous voice, "Is that Buckingham Palace?" or "Is that Lord Curzon?" so as not to arouse suspicion.

This had gone on for several years without his secrets being discovered. It made Sir Hector happy, and it made all the numbers 3333 happy, because it is rather nice to be taken for Buckingham Palace or Lord Curzon.

One morning, when Sir Hector took up the receiver to make his customary call, Joan Bubble happened to be on duty at the other end of the wire. There was a smile of expectancy on his face as he listened for the echo. . . .

At first he could not believe his ears. At least he could not believe the ear to which he was holding the telephone.

His hand trembled as he repeated the number: "Hop three—double—three—three."

Once more a girl's voice echoed him, like the tweet of a tiny willow-wren: "Hop thwee—double—thwee—thwee."

JOAN BUBBLE MAKES HER FORTUNE

Sir Hector M'Whuffle dropped the receiver and walked heavily to his chair. It was as if not only the universe, but Scotland, had tumbled in.

That night he slept little. All through the small hours he heard the sound of the wind singing “Thwee ! Thwee ! Thwee-ee-EE !” in the chimney, and, once, a mouse squeaking “Thwee ! Thwee ! Thwec !” behind the wainscot.

* * *

Next morning Sir Hector had dark rings under his eyes. He knew that something must be done, because if this sort of thing went on it would kill him. He realised that it would be useless to appeal to the Postmaster-General, who was notoriously unamenable to public opinion. The only thing to do was to raise an agitation in the Press, and the girl would have to go.

The news editor on whom he called did not dismiss Sir Hector as a madman. He saw possibilities of a news story, and sent out a reporter to discover the telephone girl who could not trill the letter “r,” and to get an interview and a photograph. The reporter was a genius, the interview a triumph. It was printed in large type under immense headlines, with a double-column photograph of Joan in the middle, and underneath it the lines :

JOLLY JOAN BUBBLE

“I lisped in numbers for the numbers came.”—POPE.

She was an amazingly beautiful girl. Sir Hector

THE SPORTING LIFE

M'Whuffle, when he opened his paper, stared and stared and stared at the photograph.

* * *

There was once a telephone girl who could not trill the letter "r."

Not only could she not say "Thr-r-ree double thr-r-ee thr-r-ee"; she could not even say "Thr-r-ree double thr-r-ree."

She had a lisp, and said, "Thwee double thwee thwee."

She became the widow of a rich tapioca merchant and lived happily ever after.

XXVIII

TWO TRAVELLERS WERE TALKING

ENGROSSED though I was in *The Star*, I could not help overhearing him. He sat behind a cigar-stump in the far corner of the railway carriage, and from beneath a crisp grey moustache explained how all the religions had their origin in the "mediumship" of their founders.

One sentence especially remained somersaulting in my memory. "And then, you know," he informed his companion in a matter-of-fact tone, "Old Moses got the Ten Commandments by automatic writing."

I had not thought of Moses in terms so familiar. I suddenly had an absurd vision of him as a worried old fellow in baggy trousers and with a straggling beard, sitting at a table with his eyes tight shut, and gripping a slate-pencil which squeaked out letter by letter the stern imperatives to the human race.

It all came, I think, from calling him "Old Moses." Call any of the great figures in history "old this" or "old that," and immediately he loses his impressiveness, and becomes the sort of person who might be precipitated into you on the top of a bus. Call William the Conqueror "Old William"—or, for

THE SPORTING LIFE

that matter, “Old Bill”—and he is no longer a conqueror, but a man who walks with a waddle.

Try the same adjective on Pericles, and you no longer see the great statesman pacing with the dignity of a Sophoclean hero under the temple shadows of the violet-crowned city. “Old Pericles,” on the contrary, is simply a knockabout figure in a shabby hat, with bulging paunch and a crease in his waistcoat.

The word “old” in this sense is always the expression of a smile. It is jaunty and jocular, and brings the greatest down to the level of the street corners. To call a man “old” is to slap him on the back and, whoever he may be, to lose one’s awe or terror of him.

Men are never less afraid of the devil than when they call him Old Harry, Old Nick, or—as has been done—Old Scratch. It is as though the word “old” had a magic effect on those who used it, and stirred in their bosoms the warm juices of familiar kindliness.

It is easy to see the difference that comes over one’s mood when one applies the word to a living man. Get into the habit of calling Mr Lloyd George “Old Lloyd George,” and it will be impossible to feel very bitter against him. He will at once seem as playful as a kitten—as bright-eyed as a mischievous child. Let Tory squires learn to think of Mr Philip Snowden as “Old Phil” and they will never again be terrified of him as of a lean and sinister Robespierre. Irishmen, if they could have

TWO TRAVELLERS WERE TALKING

brought themselves to speak of Mr Macpherson as “Old Mac,” would have found themselves coming to look on him, not as a sort of Adelphi villain in obtrusively white gloves, but as a rather queer pet. Give a man a name, and he will ultimately have to live up to it. Call him Samuel Smiles, and he will be a Samuel Smiles. Even Mr George R. Sims was said by somebody or other to owe everything to the “R.” in his name. As plain George Sims he would obviously have been much too shy to put his signature to a hair-restorer.

On the whole, however, it is better to leave the great figures of history and literature cloaked in the names that have come down to us. “Old Othello” would never have won the stooping ear of Desdemona as Othello did. “Old Savonarola”—or “Old Sav.”—would never have lit the bonfire of vanities or died a martyr.

As for “Old Moses”—no, no, it was not he who dared to approach the presence in the burning bush. “Old Moses” is probably that other character concerning whose whereabouts when the light went out children have for generations been so inquisitive. But he had nothing to do with the Ten Commandments—nothing whatever. That was an entirely different person called Moses. You may read all about him in the Bible.

XXIX

HOW MANY WINDOWS HAS YOUR HOUSE ?

A SMALL boy of seven was invited to go and stay in the country. On getting the invitation the first question he asked his prospective hostess was : " How many windows has your house ? "

Strange that no one living in the house had ever thought of that ! We all guessed, but we all guessed differently. We all counted up, but we all counted up differently.

It is an exceedingly difficult thing to remember all the windows in one's house. It is not an easy thing even to agree as to what is a window and what is not.

Is the pane of glass let into the scullery roof a window ? Is the wire-netting that admits a beam into the cellar—the oh ! so empty cellar—a window ? One does not like to deceive a child of seven ; and yet, if his taste in windows is quantitative rather than qualitative, it would be ungenerous not to count as many of them as possible. In the end we decided to call the wire-netting a window. Perhaps we could not resist a temptation to boast. It enabled our house to beat his by one window.

WINDOWS

Children are all born with a love of numbers, and only lose it when they discover at school what a very unpleasant science arithmetic is. What they really like is home arithmetic. There is an age at which it is a pleasure to count the very stairs in the house.

I suppose it is the exercise of a newly acquired faculty that gives children so much enjoyment. At any rate, as soon as counting has become an easy and commonplace accomplishment, we cease to count the stairs. It is one of the pleasures we have exhausted by the age of ten.

I asked a girl of eleven if she ever counted the stairs now. "Of course not," she replied coldly. "I'm in double figures."

I could not blame her. I have outlived the fascination of numbers myself. I would not walk across the road to discover the area in square miles of Lake Michigan. I am not sure that I even want to know how many sovereigns there are in the Bank of England. I doubt if it would be good for me to know.

And yet I feel that both she and I have lost something worth having in losing our love of counting. I should be a happier man if, as I climb to my room in Bouverie Street, I could still take pleasure in numbering the stairs, whispering those ever-charming words, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven," and so on, with rounded lips, till I reached the top.

THE SPORTING LIFE

I do not know how many stairs there are in the office. I only know that there are too many.

Yet, if I could but become a child again I should enjoy each several stair like a line in a nursery rhyme. They would mount one by one into one of those exquisite counting poems in which nursery literature abounds.

It is absurd that the appreciation of stairs should be left entirely to infants. The stairs, as every child knows, are one of the most romantic parts of the house. This is partly because they invite us to count them, partly because of the dangerous animals that lurk behind the half-open doors on the way down; and partly because of the banisters. And yet for most of us the stairs are as dull as a procession of bores, and the only pleasure we get from them is that Charlie Chaplin can fall down them.

Some day, let us hope, an architect will arise who will do justice to stairs, and who will design every step with an individuality of its own, so that we may climb delightedly from the oneness of the universe to the nineness of the Nine Muses, and, passing beyond the fourteenness of the Fourteen Points, may arrive out of breath at the thirty-nineness of the Thirty-Nine Articles. The last step in the office in which I climb up to my work might be made to express the thousand-and-oneness of the Thousand and One Nights. Possibly a child would like it. I don't.

XXX

ON PICTURE POST CARDS

THE picture post card, they say, is dead. It was the last halfpenny that killed it.

Holidays will never be the same again.

The great service of the picture post card to holiday-makers was that it ceased to matter where you went for your holiday, because, wherever you went, the picture post cards made it look like Paradise.

You might go down to the beach and find it swarming with rather unpleasant-looking children, with bits of old newspaper flying about in the wind, banana-skins as plentiful as after a feast on a West Indian island, and a refuse of tins, tea-leaves and cinders pouring, like lava from a volcano, out of the back of a row of fishermen's cottages ; but you had only to go into the stationer's and look over the local picture post cards in order to realise that the children were cherubs digging the golden floor of Heaven, that their parents were figures in as brilliant and animated a scene as Disraeli himself at his most ducal ever imagined, that the tins and the tea-leaves and the cinders were figments of your own sour and fault-finding eye.

THE SPORTING LIFE

You might have been meditating an early escape home from so squalid a slum, but the picture post card reassured you.

You went back to the beach with a seeing eye. You noticed the scarlet sunshades making patterned figures like the Great Bear or the Lion in the night sky. You began to take pleasure in the movements of thousands of little bare legs stained with the sun—in the piping of innumerable little bird voices as castles were washed down by the waves or houses hollowed out of the sands. You saw the sun gleaming on golden locks, on freckled noses, or frocks infinitely whiter than the whitest butterfly, on red and blue and green buckets.

You discovered that only one newspaper had escaped from its rightful owner, that the banana skins were few and inconspicuous, and that a determined eye could easily decline to see the refuse-heap. Thereafter you settled down to enjoy yourself.

Nor is this the end of the benefits conferred by the picture post card. It transformed the sea as well as the human beings.

You might be feeling rather dismal at having come to a place where, even on the most beautiful day, the sea, instead of being blue, was the colour of a saucepan lid. Once again the picture post card came to your rescue. On the picture post cards all seas are blue. One need not go to the Mediterranean for colours that one can get at the nearest stationer's.

ON PICTURE POST CARDS

So noble, indeed, is every expanse of water as seen on the picture post cards that a traveller, visiting Switzerland for the first time, cried out enthusiastically on seeing that exquisite pool of dyes, the Lake of Geneva, that it was "just like a picture post card!"

And if your mind is of a romantic cast, eager for the spectacle of white and roaring breakers, you will find the picture post card of equal service.

The sea that confronts your eyes may be as flat as a pancake, and the tide may rise and fall day after day with little, indolent waves that scarcely make more stir than a lodging-house spoon produces in a cup of tea.

Consult the post cards, however, and see what a surf is raging. Breakers as high as mountains come careering in from the ocean. They dash up the beach, bite viciously at the promenade, and send the spray in a burst of bombs right over the house-tops. All that is needed in order to make the thing perfect is a minute gramophone arrangement that could be inserted in the card, and that would whistle like the wind as you looked at the picture.

But, after all, it is not for one's own sake that one buys picture post cards, but for the sake of one's friends. One likes to let them know how one is enjoying oneself, and the picture post cards can explain it far better than dull and accurate prose. It would not be easy to write a description of those golden-headed children, those Italian seas, those

THE SPORTING LIFE

monstrous and unprecedented breakers, without seeming to boast. The picture post card, however, transmits and magnifies one's boast without being a charge upon one's conscience.

And now it is going to cost a halfpenny more.

Holidays, as I have said, will never be the same again.

Mr Kellaway has, by a stroke of the pen, robbed the sea of its brightest colours and taken away the character of half the watering-places of England.

XXXI

A GREAT CRICKETER—AND ME

I MADE a curious discovery about myself at the Test Match at Trent Bridge. I watched Bardsley slowly shovelling up the greatest score of the match, and found myself watching him with especial interest—with something, indeed, like personal interest—because I had read that he was a non-smoker and a teetotaller.

Three months ago this would have meant almost nothing to me. It would have been a trivial piece of personal gossip, not a fact of outstanding importance.

I had, however, since then been concerned in a small experiment to see whether life could be prolonged beyond Whitsuntide without the use of either tobacco or alcohol. I had found that in a sense it could.

That, however, is neither here nor there. What amazed me at Trent Bridge was to find that simply because I had been abstaining from these things myself, I was specially interested in the success of Bardsley because he, too, abstained from them.

It is as though one's interest in other people were

THE SPORTING LIFE

only a part of one's interest in oneself. When Bardsley's score rose to 50, my subconsciousness was probably saying to me: "We teetotallers did that."

Gregory might bowl like a railway train tearing through the gates at a level-crossing; but, just because one did not know whether he was a teetotaller or not, one looked at his triumph from the outside and had no palpitations over it. Pellew might beat the record of the west wind as he raced after a ball on its way to the boundary; but, just because it was possible that he longed for a Woodbine between the overs, his genius seemed an alien thing — something almost inhuman and outside experience.

But Bardsley! One's teetotalism and anti-tobaccoism conspired with his every stroke, and, had he driven the ball out over the pavilion beyond good and evil, one's heart would have tapped out a joyful "That was me!"

I do not think this sort of egotism is exceptional. Most of us go through the world looking for our reflection. People who have grey eyes are pleased if you tell them that most men of genius have grey eyes. People who stammer get more pleasure than anybody else from stories about Charles Lamb's stammer.

Charles Lamb becomes their mirror for the moment. They do not allow themselves to think openly, "Ah, yes, that's what I'm like!" but there

A GREAT CRICKETER—AND ME

is always an unexpressed thought of the kind in the background.

We see a comparable sort of egotism in the attempts of various people to prove that Shakespeare was a Catholic, or a Puritan, or an Anglican. Most of us laugh at these efforts, but in the bottom of our hearts we cherish the hope that Shakespeare's religious ideas may not, after all, have differed very widely from our own. We have not the courage to say: "I am a Plymouth Brother; therefore Shakespeare was a Plymouth Brother." But that is the sort of logic in which we secretly believe. Atheists probably see in Shakespeare a good specimen of an Atheist; during the war professors saw in him the leading anti-German.

How, then, is one to break oneself of this habit of the mirror—of this hunt for the ubiquitous reflection of oneself? Had Bardsley been bowled first ball, the question would not even have arisen. One would have used him as a mirror, but in that case the mirror would not have been a flattering one, and one would not have talked about it. As it is, he scored 66, and one is proud. One is prouder of being a teetotaller and a non-smoker than one has any right to be.

That is why I have given myself warning. I have warned myself that, if this intolerable pride continues, either Bardsley must learn to smoke or I shall have to take to it again.

THE SPORTING LIFE

And I feel perfectly certain that it is I, and not Bardsley, who will have to be sacrificed.

I have a sort of premonition . . . a feeling of restlessness . . . an indefinable sense of a fragrance stealing back into the air. . . .

XXXII

THE MONEY-LENDER

I HAVE never been able to understand why money-lenders are unpopular. One may know a man half a lifetime—know him fairly intimately—and yet shrink from asking him for the loan of a five-pound note. But money-lenders, with whom one has never even shaken hands, are continually offering one pocketfuls of money—money enough not only to pay one's immediate debts, but to enable one to live in modest comfort for years to come.

I had a letter from one of them last week. He marked the envelope “Confidential,” like a man seeking to do good by stealth. He did not enclose the money in the envelope, it is true : I should have liked him better if he had. But he offered to lend me a great deal more than any of my friends ever did. “Should you,” he wrote, “require temporary cash accommodation, I am prepared to advance £50 to £10,000 on note of hand alone without fees or delay.”

Now I certainly do require temporary cash accommodation, though how the gentleman with the Bond Street address came to hear of it is beyond

THE SPORTING LIFE

me. Is there a secret society of rich men in the West End with a force of detectives to ferret out deserving cases? Did the Chancellor of the Exchequer—gossiping, perhaps, at some wealthy dinner-table—let fall the fact that there had been a tell-tale delay in the payment of that last instalment of the Income Tax? Or was I seen passing along Piccadilly, glaringly in need of a new suit of clothes?

I do not know. All I know is that at a moment at which I would have given a made-up dress-tie to be able to lay my hands on £10,000, the miracle happened, and the £10,000 fell, as it were, into my lap. Not literally into my lap, of course. I suppose I shall have to call round for it. But I have nothing more to do except write that note of hand, which must be a good deal easier than writing an article for a newspaper.

Years ago I sent an appreciative reply to a gentleman who had written offering to lend me £10,000. But I think he must have been what is vulgarly known as a “wrong ‘un.” Instead of accepting my note of hand, as he had promised to do, he sent a most unpleasant-looking person to look at my furniture.

I confess I was disappointed. I was disappointed not only about the £10,000, but in human nature. After all, there were lots of other people jostling each other for the right to lend me £10,000. But, just when one’s view of human nature is at its

THE MONEY-LENDER

rosiest, to be called on by a man imperfectly shaved, who looks at one's sofa as greedily as though he wished to eat it, is a blow to simple faith.

I feel sure that my new friend is different. At least, I am not going to doubt him in advance. He has a good address—a much better address than I have. I half suspect that he may have taken a fancy to something I wrote, and this may be his way of showing it. A loan may be merely a sensitive man's method of conferring a gift. Stranger things have happened. I have read about them in novels.

My only sorrow is that I shan't be able to bring away the money in gold. I should like to have driven home in a taxi so packed with sovereigns that there would be hardly room to sit down, with sovereigns sticking all over me like confetti, getting into the brim of my hat and down my neck and into my boots. I should like to see them pouring out of the taxi door when I opened it, rolling on the pavement, and myself in such a glut of gold that I would not even trouble to pick them up.

If this ever happens to me—and it cannot happen till the currency is restored—I shall owe it all to my money-lender in Bond Street. Can you wonder if I am a little extravagant in my appreciation ?

XXXIII

THE CHEMIST

THE chemist is on the whole the most enviable of men. He has all the pleasure of doing people good without ever having to get up at two o'clock in the morning, like a doctor, or having to perform a dismal round of baptisms, weddings and funerals, like a clergyman.

He is the magician of the twentieth century. If only he were frowned on by the law, and we had to resort to him in secret, we could not fail to recognise how romantic and wonderful a person he is. With what fascination we should watch him among his phials and his tubes, measuring out his poisons, taking down jar after jar with its Latin words as tailless as Manx cats, shaking everything up into a brew the very prospect of which sends a man out into the street with faith in the future !

He himself until lately seemed aware of the wizardry of his work, and filled his window with huge purple and green and orange jars that made his shop stare at night like a dragon with different-coloured eyes.

He is, I am afraid, abandoning those signals of his craft that proclaimed his descent from Merlin.

THE CHEMIST

The modern chemist's window is usually devoted to a business-like display of cameras and tooth-paste and patent foods for babies. The world is losing another of its pictures. Art critics are constantly making a fuss about saving some Velasquez or Breughel for the nation. They would be better employed in saving the chemists' windows.

Even if the chemist gives up his coloured jars, however (where do they go to, I wonder ? Does he still treasure them upstairs in the drawing-room ?), he will continue to be the most enviable of mankind.

He may become less like a character out of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, but he will become more like a character out of Anthony Trollope. To be a licensed dispenser of poisons is romantic enough, but it is not the whole of life. One cannot live perpetually on so sensational a plane.

What attracts me most in the chemist's life is that it must satisfy so fully the human instinct of curiosity. The chemist hardly needs to ask the most urgent of all questions : "How are you ?" He knows, when he looks at your prescription.

He has all the secrets of the neighbourhood in his ledgers. He knows who has a cold and who has measles and who cannot sleep at night and who has enlarged his liver by the follies of the table. He even knows who has a corn and who has an ingrowing toe-nail. If he were in a mood to gossip, he would surprise you by the things he could tell.

THE SPORTING LIFE

You might think he would grow morbid under the burden of so many secrets. On the contrary, he is the most cheerful of men. It is unsatisfied curiosity that makes men morbid. The chemist knows all the scandal of our bodies and can afford to smile.

His life, too, is beautifully free from monotony. He has not to draw half-pint after half-pint of bitter like a publican. Everyone who enters his shop demands a different bottle. He has the varied life of an artist, and I often wonder that he does not sing at his work.

His whole life, indeed, is a game of musical glasses. He improvises with his drugs as a musician might with the notes of a piano. His is the music that soothes the modern Saul. He will give you a strychnine fantasia that will set your pulses leaping, and he has a bromide *adagio* movement that will lull you like the sound of waves falling on the sand.

If you are a true medicine-lover, there are few of his medicines that you will not find delightful. You will like one of his medicines because of its pleasant taste, and another because it tastes so unpleasant that it can hardly fail to do you good.

There is a small minority who never take medicine. They are the kill-joys—the enemies of hope. The rest of us, whose cupboard shelves groan under half-emptied bottles, are not likely to be influenced by them. We are vehemently pro-chemist, and we

THE CHEMIST

might sum up our view of him in a variant on Omar Khayyám :

“I often wonder what the chemists buy
That’s half so precious as the stuff they sell.”

It is absurd that all the songs of the bottle in the poets should be about beer and whisky. What we need is a good song about cough mixture or the drops that cure head noises, dizziness, heartburn, tired feet, red noses, pains after eating, burning spot under left shoulder blade, watery eyes, facial blemishes, palpitation, projecting ears, and all the other ills that even you and I were never silly enough to imagine we had.

XXXIV

SITTING UP FOR THE NEW YEAR

OF all human habits there is none more curious than that of sitting up for the New Year. Not only do we sit up, but we sit up in the spirit of an audience of school children waiting for the curtain to go up on a pantomime. This, too, in spite of all the warnings we get in a dozen prophetic almanacs as to what lies in store for us.

I have not yet seen *Old Moore* for 1922—neither the real *Old Moore* nor the authentic *Old Moore*, nor the *Old Moore* with which the other *Old Moores* have no connection—but I am fairly confident that it begins with a hieroglyph containing a picture of a house on fire, a railway accident, a riot, an earthquake, and a crown toppling from the head of an unrecognisable monarch.

It is just possible there may be a hint of a fashionable wedding or of a baby being led to the christening. But on the whole *Old Moore* eschews sickly sentiment and chooses the better part of the Fat Boy who liked to make people's flesh creep.

In spite of this, most of us who sit up till twelve to-night—even those of us who feel that 1921 deserves to be sentenced to penal servitude for life—

SITTING UP FOR THE NEW YEAR

will feel kindly towards 1922. After all, it is only a baby—a helpless little thing. Hope gathers round its cradle. 1921 was old enough to know better. But this little parody of humanity, red, all but bald, and bawling—who but a Jonathan Edwards could damn it in advance? Even if it keeps you awake at night, you will only have to rise and pat it on the right part of the back and all will be well.

By the end of February it will be time enough to put it in the corner. By April you may legitimately address it as “Incorrigible boy.” By June, when it is sowing its wild oats, you may ask with tears in your voice if it wishes to bring down your grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. By July you may take steps to export it to the Colonies, where Mr W. M. Hughes lives. By September you may be thinking of cutting off the remittance. By the 31st December, when you are preparing for the funeral, you may find yourself murmuring: “Perhaps it was for the best.”

But not now—not now! Not till it has begun to play with the fire-irons.

We do not look a baby, any more than we look a gift-horse, in the mouth. We do not say, “Oh, you little villain! What crimes you are capable of!” but gaze at it with a wild, invincible hope that it will be a better man than its father. We cannot help believing that it is much more likely to be an Abraham Lincoln than a Charles Peace.

THE SPORTING LIFE

A baby is always the most wonderful child ever born.

That, I think, explains our attitude to the New Year. I for one regard the picture of the earthquake as a slander. It may, for all I know, come true later on, but it is not true now. It is for no earthquake-monger or imp of railway accidents and houses on fire that we ring these joy-bells. Rather, it is for a cherub, innocent as the first Adam, trailing clouds of glory, howling for Paradise.

And it won't be happy till it gets it. And it may get it. Miracles have happened. Who could have foretold the birth of Shakespeare or the invention of simnel cake? Meanwhile let us prepare for the best. Who knows but in 1922 we may all learn to behave like human beings? Little 1922 is *such* a pet, it is bound to make a difference.

XXXV

A DEFENCE OF NONSENSE

MRS BARNETT has been attacking nursery rhymes. She says that "Hey, diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle," is nonsense, and that we ought not to teach it to children.

It is certainly nonsense, but that is no argument against teaching it to children or to anybody else who does not already know it.

It would be better for the world to lose all the inventions of the last two hundred years—machinery, gas, electricity, railway trains, and the theory of relativity—than that it should lose its appetite for nonsense.

There is no more to be said for nonsense than for laughter, play, or Christmas holly. All we know is that without such things the world would be one of the dark stars.

After all, there is a good deal of sense in nonsense. It reminds us that we are temporary inhabitants of the most disorderly of the planets, which indeed has run away with us, whether we like it or not, like a bolting horse.

We do not know how it all happened, and we have a still hazier notion of what is going to happen next.

THE SPORTING LIFE

At times we get used to the motion, and we concentrate on clinging on resolutely. At other times we get a glimpse of the universe whizzing past, and, if that is not a cow jumping over the moon, our eyes are deceiving us.

Rationalists will, no doubt, explain that the Cat and the Fiddle was a public-house, that the saltatory cow was seen by a late reveller, that the little dog was merely trying to bark its master home, and that the fourth line was his explanation to his wife when he caught hold of the table-cloth to steady himself and the supper things slid to the floor.

But it is not what the rhyme means to us to-day. It is a tiny feast of unreason—a fantastic re-creation of a fantastic universe. It is a denial of use and wont—a breaking of the bounds of everyday experience. It is a comic revolt against natural law, and a leap into the free air of miracles.

It may be said that cows do not do such things. Well, this cow did. It still exists in a Utopia of nonsense, where Sunday falls in the middle of the week, where two sides of a triangle are not necessarily greater than the third side, where too many cooks make the broth a dish for an epicure, and where Rome was built in much less than a day.

Experience may teach us otherwise, but we have to be on our guard against experience. Experience is merely an illusion of familiarity with a universe of which we know almost nothing. The child and the poet are not subject to this illusion. Hence

A DEFENCE OF NONSENSE

their eternally fresh amazement. Hence their escape from under the iron heel of reason into the golden air of the imagination.

Not that you or I can safely live in indifference to experience and reason. But we, too, need to escape now and then into the ports and happy havens of nonsense. Most of the Churches make allowance for some brief interval of folly—some holiday from seriousness, on which the world is seen to be as topsy-turvy as it really is.

If good nature is a virtue, nonsense may even be defended on ethical grounds in that it helps to keep alive the habit of good nature. It may easily embitter a child to be taught :

“How doth the little busy bee.”

But no child ever felt ill-natured while conning over the lines :

“Hey, diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon.”

The nonsense-writers are the fathers of the church of good nature. There is no need to ignore Mill’s *Logic*, but *Alice in Wonderland* is a necessary supplement to it. Of the two, *Alice* is probably the truer to life. It is by all accounts—I was never able to get through Mill’s *Logic*—the more amusing.

XXXVI

A MEDITATION ON MILK

MILK? Yes, it *is* a possible subject. . . . I did not realise until last week what a dangerous thing milk was.

I met a lady who was in a state of extreme indignation because a rather advanced doctor had accused her of drinking milk with as severe an air as though he had caught her drinking whisky.

"But it makes me feel better," she protested.

"Of course, it makes you *feel* better," he replied, with a contemptuous sneer; "that is the reason why a man drinks whisky-and-soda. Don't you realise that milk is a powerful stimulant—a far too powerful stimulant for a human being? It is so strong that a calf fed on it grows to its full height in three years. The human being isn't intended to grow at that rate. To drink milk is simply to intoxicate yourself with 'boom-food.'"

And he put her on to barley-water.

It was a great relief to me to hear it. I had never liked milk. I had often watched people drinking it in restaurants and been conscious of a curious feeling of repulsion. They looked as if they

A MEDITATION ON MILK

were enjoying it, and were, if anything, rather proud of themselves for enjoying it.

I myself could never order a "small milk" in a restaurant except in an ashamed half-whisper. And, if the waitress did not hear me, and asked, "What did you say?" I always replied, "Coffee."

Now I feel my blushes were justified. Milk-drinkers are simply tipplers, who prefer to stupefy themselves on animal, rather than on vegetable, juices.

When I see anyone in future raising a glass of milk to his lips, I will lay my hand on his arm and say: "Hold! Is life so void of pleasure that you must drink poison? Oh, set that tumbler down. Milk, my poor friend, is a raging demon. Look at America. Before America took to milk, she was all for the League of Nations. Since she has become a nation of milk-bibbers, she has lost all her ideals. She no longer cares for anything but more money to buy milk with."

Then I would remind him how the great men who had poisoned themselves in the past had tried many kinds of poison, but that none of them had tried milk.

"I can give you nine and ninety reasons against drinking milk," I would say in conclusion; "can you give me even one for drinking it, except that you like it because it gives you a deceptive glow of well-being?"

Even the milkman seems to be affected by the

THE SPORTING LIFE

milk he carries round. He comes bawling up the steps, making a noise—"Mee-oh!"—such as I have never heard from another human being except a tipsy man I once came upon who was trying to imitate a cat.

And yet some people give milk to babies.

I foresee the time when public opinion will assert itself and when the indiscriminate use of milk will no longer be possible.

In those days the young man who asks a seemingly innocent country girl, "Where are you going, my pretty maid?" and who receives the conventional reply, "I'm going a-milking, sir," instead of proposing to accompany her to her dope centre, will insist that she must accompany him to the nearest police station.

The milkmaid will be treated as a harpy, and as for the cow, big-game hunters will pursue it through the fields as a far more dangerous animal than a man-eating lion.

XXXVII

CHILD'S TALK

I WAS sitting in a railway carriage opposite a child who was holding a large elephant on wheels under its right arm. I cannot remember what the child looked like, but I remember that the elephant had a skin of grey cloth and a red saddle, and that the child had squeezed its handkerchief under the saddle, and, pointing to this, said, as if telling me a secret: "My pocket."

It always comes as a relief to me when a child ventures some remark of this kind, because when I meet a strange child for the first time in the presence of grown-up people I do not, as a rule, find conversation easy.

One's ordinary conversation seems so far beneath the level of a small child. To say to it, "What wonderful weather we've been having!" would seem an outrage. The child would merely stare.

Thirty or forty years hence it will have adapted itself to grown-up conversation, and will have learned to return babble for babble like an ordinary inmate of a railway carriage. At present it believes that conversation should be as interesting as

THE SPORTING LIFE

the things one thinks about, and that it should either be amusing or informing and serious.

On the other hand, it does not regard as serious many of the things that you and I regard as serious. There is no use looking over your paper at it and saying: "Lloyd George seems to be getting into hot water with the French about the Poles." It has never heard of Mr Lloyd George, or of the French, or of the Poles.

The only words in the sentence that will convey anything to its mind are "hot water," and these will call up a picture of somebody putting his toe into a steaming bath and having to withdraw it hurriedly.

This may lead to some reminiscences of baths of its own and to a conversation on baths in general—especially on the horror of sitting on in the bath when the plug has been taken out, and there begins the gurgling of the animal that lives just under the plug-hole and is always trying to swallow you.

One ought not to say "the animal," perhaps; it is really called "the demon," or rather "the demond." Anyhow, it is worse than Mr Lloyd George, worse than the French, worse than the Poles. Mr Lloyd George does not at least hide down the waste-pipe and make gurgling noises.

That is why the problem of making the bath safe for children seems, at the age of six, a matter of far more urgent public importance than the problem of making the world safe for democracy.

CHILD'S TALK

The truth is, perhaps, that either the child or the grown-up person is a little insane. We should certainly think a child of six mad if it said the things that men of sixty say in railway trains. If, for instance, a child of six broke in on a discussion on the coal dispute with : "Settle the matter once for all. Humph, humph! Like having a tooth out. Humph! Painful just for the moment. Humph! Feel all the better for it afterwards. Humph, humph, humph!"—one would carry it off to a mental specialist to have its bumps examined.

On the other hand, if an elderly gentleman went about carrying a grey elephant with a red saddle under his arm, and wearing his handkerchief under the elephant's saddle instead of in an ordinary pocket, we should regard this as even more convincing proof of his insanity than his remarks on the coal strike. If he pointed to the saddle and said with a beaming eye, as if communicating a secret, "My pocket," one would undoubtedly change one's compartment at the next station.

And yet, when the child behaved in this fashion, I experienced not only no alarm, but positive pleasure. The child and I had now something to talk about.

I discovered that it was devoted not only to elephants, but to all animals—that it liked animals for toys and animals in stories.

"You like animals better than people?" I asked it after a time.

THE SPORTING LIFE

It paused for a moment to consider whether I was the sort of person to whom one could tell an important secret. Then it nodded and confessed, ever so shyly, ever so sweetly: "I like animals and railway junctions."

After that we had a perfectly engrossing conversation.

XXXVIII

WHY PAY TAXES ?

MAN is the only animal that pays taxes. Other animals do most of the things that he does—most of the expensive things, at least, like fighting—but they manage to do them without being fleeced at the same time by a Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I do not know who invented taxes. I suspect it was Civil servants, who could not otherwise have made a living. They saw that all would be well—for them at least—if they could persuade us to pay them for organising things that every other community of living creatures can do for itself without organisation.

Could we not have imitated the bees who preserve perfect law and order without paying a salary to a single Home Office clerk? Could we not have modelled ourselves on the rooks, who punish the delinquents of the rookery without a costly retinue of policemen, gaolers, magistrates, and prison commissioners?

Even in making war, for all the money we spend, we do not seem to have been able to achieve more than the trick of killing each other at a distance

THE SPORTING LIFE

instead of killing each other close at hand, as the other animals do.

We are not really more deadly or devilish than the beasts of prey—the tiger, the boa-constrictor, and the flea on the Bombay rat. We cannot make fighting more fatal than it was in the days when Cain killed Abel.

Some people even contend that, if we were disarmed altogether, and fought with sticks and stones and things that can be picked up on the roadside, fighting would be immensely more dangerous than we have been able to make it in these days of bombing plane and submarine and poison gas.

Why, then, all this nonsense of annual Budgets ? One would not grudge a few guineas if there were a chance of their achieving something that wild beasts do not do every day for nothing. One would like to see them used for the purpose of running a permanent Shakespeare theatre and paying a substantial fee to everybody, if anybody, who could be persuaded to attend. One would gladly see them spent on official propaganda in defence of Beethoven against the musical critics.

There are many useful objects for which a Chancellor of the Exchequer might demand our money. He would be justified, I think, in raising a few millions for the purpose of providing osteopathic treatment for people who have developed

WHY PAY TAXES ?

curvature of the spine as the result of too much strap-hanging.

One would not object even to the money's being wasted, if it were wasted amusingly. But it is wasted in a way that seems to leave nearly everybody more miserable than they were before.

Possibly, human beings prefer to be miserable. They undoubtedly pay statesmen to make them miserable. They will always support a statesman who says he wants to buy bombs. They are immediately suspicious of a statesman who says he wants to buy something useful, like a coal mine, or something amusing, like a telephone system.

If he told them he was going to provide free meals in the restaurants, they would think him mad, and turn him out. On the other hand, if he offered to lead them to death and disaster, they would follow him with the wildest enthusiasm, and ask him if he was sure he had enough money to do the thing handsomely.

I conclude that paying taxes must be a form of collective mania. It is the sort of thing no man would do solitarily.

The ideal thing, in my opinion, would be to make taxes voluntary, so that anyone who wished the Prime Minister to take a firm line about Yap or to make war on San Marino could forward his request to Downing Street and enclose a cheque towards expenses.

Under such a system a war could be floated like

THE SPORTING LIFE

a company, and those who really wanted it could take the risks and pay the expenses. No one need fear that this would do away with war. It would be a poor war in which the shares did not stand at a premium within a few hours of the opening of hostilities.

XXXIX

OLD CLOTHES

I HAVE been reading a novel in which it is said of the hero that he loved his tumbledown home "as a man loves an old suit of clothes, ripped in one or two places and with some of the buttons missing."

It is not the first time that I have found this sentimentalism about old clothes in literature. Authors, indeed, almost invariably write as though an old suit of clothes, with some of the buttons missing, were all that is needed to make a reasonable man happy.

I do not wish to appear eccentric, but I must confess I do not share this passion for dressing badly.

If I had my way, I should like to look like one of those glazed and elegant young men you see in the tailors' advertisements.

I should like to wear a morning coat with braid round the edges, to have a crease like a live rail running down the front of my trousers, to wear shining patent leather boots, and altogether to look as if a valet, a barber, a bootmaker and a laundress must all be mighty proud of having assisted to turn out such a masterpiece.

THE SPORTING LIFE

I do not take it as a compliment when people try to say agreeable things to me about my shabby clothes.

I met a man the other day who said earnestly, looking at my bulging pockets and the baggy knees of my trousers: "I wish to heaven I had the courage to dress like you." I resented the remark, in the first place because he did not wish anything of the sort, and in the second place because he apparently believed that I had the bad taste to dress like this for pleasure.

Believe me, there is no pleasure in it. I would dress like Mr Arnold Bennett if only I knew how.

It is not at all amusing, if you take a seat in a first-class carriage, to have a ticket inspector on your heels, with a "Caught you at last!" gleam in his eye and a peremptoriness in the tone with which he says "Tickets, please!" that is positively Prussian.

If for any reason I have to travel first class, and I make my way to the door of the restaurant car, the attendant waves me back and says, with a frown: "Third-class dining-car lower down!" I am sure he never says that to Mr Bennett.

Life, it will be seen, is not a path of roses for the man who does not know how to dress. What it must be like for a man who actually goes about short of buttons and with rips in his garments one does not care to speculate.

Some of the sentimental novelists ought to try

OLD CLOTHES

the experiment of dressing like this, when they will see for themselves how little romance there is in it.

I candidly admit that I like to see other people badly dressed, if they are sufficiently badly dressed, just as I like to see a picturesque ruin. But I do not myself like to be the ruin.

If my hat sags like a weather-beaten roof, far from affording me any æsthetic satisfaction, it horrifies me only less than a perfectly new hat would, though I have often kept up my courage by pretending otherwise.

If only I could remember to call at the hatter's I should certainly get a new one. But I have a memory that plays tricks, and the only time I ever remember anything about the hatter is when I am leaving home and when I get back again.

And it is the same with the tailor. The tailor is my ideal man, for all the attempts of the proverb to belittle him. My favourite philosopher is Mr Bradley. My favourite characters in English history are the three tailors of Tooley Street.

There is no man in whose hands I would trust myself sooner than in a tailor's.

How nobly he amends the faults of Nature ! I had rather go to him for a neat pair of shoulders than to the sculptor of the Venus de Milo. He is the only person who could conceivably make me look like a Dana Gibson drawing. And I should like to look like a Dana Gibson drawing.

That, I suppose, is what is meant by being a

THE SPORTING LIFE

“gent.” Nature may make a gentleman, but the tailor alone can make a “gent.” His advertisements of “gents.’ summer suits,” and, still more, of “gents.’ trouserings,” always strike me as being the perfection of alluring prose.

For myself, I would rather face the world in well-made “gents.’ trouserings” than in the costume of a Greek god or in the toga of Julius Cæsar.

XL

THE MASTER

I HAD often heard that the chief pleasure of motoring was neither driving nor being driven, but was crawling under the body of the car to find out the cause of the breakdown. I never believed this until Saturday. I believe it now.

Not that it came to the point of crawling under the car. The trouble was only a minor one—a puncture—and could be diagnosed in a sitting or standing position. But at least it made an operation necessary — two operations, indeed, for it happened twice. And I, being the only man present, and not much of a man at that, could not do less than offer to lend a hand.

On the occasion of the first puncture, I stood aside and held things in the capacity of a nurse rather than of a surgeon. I was still a little awe-struck before the mystery of machinery. I felt that the motor car understood at least as much about me as I understood about the motor car. Hence I was content if I was allowed only to hold a wrench or a spanner, or to perform the last stages in loosening one or two of the screws.

THE SPORTING LIFE

What finally converted me from an onlooker into a convinced motorist was the removal of the wheel. It was a very tight wheel—as tight as a double tooth. It would not have budged for Sandow. We all dragged at it and shook it in turn, but it made no difference. I myself shook it till the body of the car creaked and groaned and threatened to break into a thousand pieces.

In the end we were all giving advice together, all tugging in different directions, and any passer-by must have thought that he was watching a road fight among a party of picnickers.

We wrestled with that wheel like a frenzied octopus. Then, ever so suddenly, without anything to account for the change, it became submissive as a lamb. It glided gently off, and the motor car was left on the side of the road, three-legged and at our mercy.

When I looked at my hands and saw how dirty they were, I was filled with such a sense of mastery as I had not known since I first learned to play the pianola. You, too, have probably had that wonderful experience. Yesterday you were unable to pick out the tune of *Home to Our Mountains* with one finger, and the piano was a Sphinx mocking your helplessness. To-day a rage is in your feet, and you sit at the piano, master of the passion and humour of Beethoven, of Bach's music from the sky, of the rapturous weariness of Chopin. It is a solemn occasion for those who have to listen to

THE MASTER

you, but as for you, you are the instrument's conqueror. You are Napoleon at the battle of Austerlitz.

On the whole, the motor car gives you an even greater sense of triumph than the pianola. The pianola does not make your hands and your clothes dirty. You have nothing to show for your trouble. You have none of the pleasure of removing grease and oil and dust with a piece of waste.

When the second puncture took place, no power on earth could have prevented me from doing what I liked with that motor car. Single-handed I raised one corner from the ground—with the help of a tiny lever. Single-handed I removed the cap from the wheel—the most dogged and fiercely resisting cap it would be possible to conceive. Single-handed I wrenched off screw after screw. Single- (or rather double-) handed I gathered up the wheel in my arms and carried it off, and brought back another one and fixed it in its place.

St George may have looked as grimy—he cannot have felt more gloriously exhilarated—when, his hair matted with perspiration and his suit ruined, he finally set his foot on the dragon's neck.

I would not have exchanged the green and black and brown of my hands for the most silken skin in Christendom.

A German student may look as proudly on his duelling scars.

THE SPORTING LIFE

I suppose it happens to everyone at some time or other to climb to just such a peak of boastfulness. But it cannot happen to anyone very often.

Motoring would become too exciting if every puncture produced this fearful joy. . . .

I wish you had seen my hands.

XLI

BATHS

THERE has been a praiseworthy attempt on the part of certain manufacturers to have a tax imposed on baths made by foreigners. Foreigners, it appears, have taken to dumping in England the baths that they ought to be using themselves.

I am strongly of the opinion that baths ought to be taxed. At least cold ones ought. Human beings have been divided into two races—those who bath and those who don't. It seems to me that a much more real line of division falls between those who take cold baths and those who take warm ones.

The men who take warm baths are as a rule quiet, inoffensive people, whom you could hardly tell from the people who never take a bath at all. They never boast. They think no more of taking a bath than of drinking a cup of tea. They regard it as the sort of thing anybody might do, and nothing to crow about.

The men who take cold baths, on the other hand, have made such a song about it that many foreigners have been deluded into believing that splashing

THE SPORTING LIFE

cold water all over the body—and the room—is an English national habit.

As a matter of fact, it is nothing of the sort. The average Englishman would never dream of beginning the day by sitting down in a pool of cold water as if he were mad or a merman. No sane man would have consented to do such a thing before the nineteenth century. Socrates never did it, nor Shakespeare.

The habit of singing in the bathroom (so frequently deplored by students of contemporary manners) may be attributed almost entirely to the innovation of the cold bath. Man in his first state of innocence does not sing in the bathroom. Besides, if one has an ordinary warm bath, one does not want to sing in it any more than one wants to sing at table.

The cold bath, it is legitimate to conclude, has an intoxicating effect on the majority of those addicted to it, so that they lose all their sense of shame and begin to bawl like late revellers. In time, no doubt, a new Anacreon will appear and write a series of songs suitable for these Bacchanalians of the cold tap.

It will be a devil-may-care sort of poetry, I fancy, and far from edifying. It will do for cold water what “Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum!” does for fermented liquor. It will express a wild, unnatural gaiety—a loosening of the bonds of reason.

BATHS

The cold bath is to be deplored, however, on other grounds besides the fact that it makes many people sing who would otherwise be silent. That merely affects other people. It is the effect on oneself that is most appalling.

I cannot explain what the effect is, but you can recognise it when you see it—the trembling hand, the white hair, the bowed back of the man who has never missed his daily cold bath for seventy years. Yet, when once men have acquired a taste for it, they find it almost impossible to give it up.

Argument is useless. You may tell them that it is against nature, and point out that a hot-water tap has been specially provided in every well-regulated household in order that they may use it. You might as well preach to the stones.

So long as there are bathrooms these wretched victims of an insensate craving will not be able to resist the temptations of the cold tap. Tell them that they are ageing themselves prematurely : they merely laugh at you. Better anything, they feel, than that they should be deprived of their morning sensation.

My own view is that, if you cannot prohibit self-indulgence of this kind, you can at least tax it. I should like to see warm baths made free for everybody, and cold baths taxed, like beer, at so much a gallon. Cold water is all very well in a river or in a pond : it is entirely out of place in a bath. I am

THE SPORTING LIFE

not sure that the cold tap ought not to be labelled
“Poison.”

It should certainly be labelled “Caution,” and anyone under sixteen found turning it on should be put under the care of the court missionary.

XLII

THE NAMES OF HORSES

THREE was a curious item of news in the paper the other day. It appeared on the sporting page. This was the report of a race which was run at Lewes. One of the horses that took part was named League of Nations. It came in last in a field of eleven horses. The winner of the race was a horse called Thoughtless. Thus does life compose her ironic fables, and the very Turf is ablaze with warnings to the heedless tribe of men.

The victory of Thoughtless is not, I am afraid, an isolated incident in the year's racing. I have taken the trouble to look up a sporting calendar, and I find that on the whole the results of the season's races have been painfully discouraging to the angels. One of the most victorious animals of the year has been the filly Stupidity. Another winner has been Nonentity, who, by a curious chance, is a daughter of King William. Aimless has won, while Be Serious (whose dam was Don't Wink) has never succeeded in getting a place higher than the second.

The light-minded Joy Girl, on the other hand, has never had any difficulty in getting a good place, and

THE SPORTING LIFE

has on at least two occasions sailed in a triumphant first.

Liberals have to face the melancholy fact that Wee Free took part in but one race, and was an "also ran," as a result of breaking a blood-vessel. Progress seems also to have run only once, and to have been all but last in a race which was won by Musket Ball. It is worth noting that in this race Demagogue was another of the horses that defeated Progress.

Compare this with the records of some of the reactionary horses. Battle of the Boyne has won one race, Orange William has won two, Orange Prince has won one, Carson's Boy has been second. And both Ulster Lad and Ulster Lady have twice been among the first three.

Sinn Fein horses have not been nearly so lucky as this, though Rebel, Irish Volunteer, and Soldier Song have all won races. To balance these victories, Irish Republic was defeated in the Irish Oaks.

The temperance party has, on the whole, had a good year on the race-course. Pussyfoot has won a race, though Pussyfoot II. has been less lucky. The victory of Sarsaparilla at seven to one more than balances the repeated defeats of King George's filly, Lemonade. Ginger Wine has also been a winner, while Champagne, Absinthe, Drinkmore, Brandy Snap and Christmas Trouble have all been defeated. I think the two victories of Dry Toast may also be fairly claimed by the temperance party.

THE NAMES OF HORSES

I have no space to analyse the racing results of the season in greater detail, and I must leave it to Old Moore or some other seer to discuss their prophetic significance.

Racing men, I believe, are among the most superstitious of mortals, and, if they do not find sermons in stones, they find tips and omens everywhere else.

I remember many years ago meeting a man who denounced himself bitterly for not having paid due attention to the omens. It was the year in which, within a brief interval, *Manifesto* won the Grand National and *General Peace* won the Lincolnshire. My friend declared that he ought to have foreseen this wonderful "double," because the Tsar's manifesto to the Governments of Europe on universal peace was just then on everybody's tongue.

I regard the victory of *Thoughtless* over *League of Nations*, however, less as an omen than as a warning. At the same time I think that, if Major David Davies is going to call a horse *League of Nations*, he ought to make sure to begin with that it is going to be a winner.

The most hopeful omen to be got from the year's racing, perhaps, is the victory of a horse called *Unity*, which is by *Ulster King* out of *Irish Question*. But I trust that *Unity* will not by any chance meet *Thoughtless* or *Stupidity* before the end of the season. *Thoughtless* and *Stupidity* are both exceedingly dangerous animals.

XLIII

CAPTAIN CUTTLE WINS THE DERBY

YOU probably won't believe me, but, when I was asked to go to the Derby, I went home and dreamed a dream, and in my dream I saw Captain Cuttle breaking loose from a cloud of horses and dashing forward—oh, how magnificently! —first past the winning-post.

How did I know it was Captain Cuttle? I cannot tell. I suppose the dream said so.

I described my dream next day to several trustworthy witnesses.

"He flashed past," I told them—and my own eye must have been flashing—"like a kingfisher." They laughed scornfully. They always do.

Yet, strange as it may seem, I did not back Captain Cuttle.

You may put this down to moral reasons. You will be partly right. But there were other reasons as well.

In the first place, no man, however much he likes horses, can back every horse in the race.

In the second place, I was told by so many people that this year's Derby was any horse's race that I thought it was more economical to buy a fifty-to-one

CAPTAIN CUTTLE WINS

chance on Silpho or Irish Battle than a mere eight or ten to one chance on Captain Cuttle.

In the third place, Dr Freud has made me rather doubtful of dreams, and I thought that to dream about Captain Cuttle might merely mean that I was in love with a seafaring man's wife.

In the fourth place, I was unlucky.

It was bound to be an unlucky Derby, for this was the 139th time the race was run, and, as you can see for yourself, the digits in the number, if added together, make up 13.

Superstitious people—it is extraordinary how superstitious some people become on a race-course—were pointing to the fact that Pondoland's number on the race-card was also 13. It was a bad day for several of us.

It was not a bad day at all, however, if it had not been for the racing.

A lark was singing in the sun as I walked along the Downs to the course, and every little hillock in sight was plumed with hawthorn.

A woman in a shawl—call her a gipsy; it is more romantic—held out her hand to every passer-by.

"Leave a penny for the baby," she pleaded, "for luck."

"You've a lucky face," she would say to a bulbous man to whose features it would have been impossible to pay any other compliment.

A few yards farther on a little girl in a shawl was making an equally irresistible appeal :

THE SPORTING LIFE

"A penny to bring you luck," she murmured gently, and luck is certainly cheap at the price.

Then came a tipster with a brick-red face and a silk hat, standing under his banner in a hollow.

"Did I tell you or did I not?" he was challenging earth and sky hoarsely.

"Of course," he sneered, "you people know all about horses. It didn't interest you when I told you I had a twenty-to-one winner."

He impressed upon us the tragic situation of men who miss the chance of a lifetime through not buying a tip from a man who knew as much about horses as he did.

Even so I found it easier to resist him than the tramp who offered me a "comic race-card," including a tip, for twopence.

The comic race-card did not err on the side of refinement.

It gave the programme of what it called the Epsom Salts Meeting, and the races included the Scratchy Selling Plate, with Eczema among the runners. It might, I thought, have been more amusing without any perceptible loss of grossness.

I ignored the tip that was scrawled inside. It was Psychology. That was my only stroke of luck during the day.

As for the race-course—well, you know what a crowd is like. But you do not know what this crowd was like, and I cannot tell you.

It was rather like Hampstead Heath on Easter

CAPTAIN CUTTLE WINS

Monday, and still more like a settlement of a million Red Indians with their wigwams, and most of all like Derby Day.

The scene of the race, as you probably know, is a grassy hill-side between the two heels of a horseshoe ; and inside the horseshoe is an innumerable collection of booths and book-makers with banners, of red motor buses and black motor cars, of human beings and ginger-beer bottles and pieces of waste paper, of pork pies and sweets that you couldn't eat and drinks that you couldn't drink, of tipsters and beggars and people with nothing to do, all in such confusion that the Recording Angel himself would be hard put to it to tell one from the other.

At one side of the horseshoe the stands rise tier above tier, like the boxes in Covent Garden—white balconies packed with men in tall hats and women whose faces were melting under their coloured sunshades.

The men, I thought, were splendid. Never have I admired the dogged courage of my sex more than while I watched the members of the Jockey Club parading on the steep little green under their stand, each sheathed in a black morning-coat and with a black silk hat—or, at the very least, a white topper—on his head.

It was all so correct. It was as correct as Addison's prose. And it was all the more heroic of the leaders of the racing world to dress like this, because

THE SPORTING LIFE

most of them are elderly or old, and must have felt the heat oppressive.

The Jockey Club, however, has a reputation to keep up. It is, I understand, the most exclusive club in the world, and there are men living who have won the Derby, even peers of the realm, who have never been able to get elected as members. The Jockey Club is the last stronghold, not only of respectability, but of ultra-respectability. The House of Lords is riff-raff compared to it.

"If you see a man in there," said a friend to me, pointing to the stand, "you'll know he's all right. He's a good man."

Many people do not realise to what an extent horse-racing is the sport of good men, and not only of good men, but of good old men.

Let those who doubt it go and have a look at the Jockey Club stand at Epsom.

As for the grand-stand, it was just possible to move about amid the tumult and the shouting of the book-makers in Tattersalls' Enclosure below it.

Hot? A fat book-maker in a panama hat melted into thin air before my eyes.

"Every Derby has a special name," a man said to me; "this is the Sweat Derby."

His own face was fuller of rivers than the map of England. Other book-makers sent for bottles of ginger-ale, and drank them, sizzling.

Many people were wearing handkerchiefs suspended under their hats to protect the backs of their necks.

CAPTAIN CUTTLE WINS

Medical students moved about outside, some dressed in white jackets with Scottish caps, others in some sort of Hiawatha garb, and collected money for the hospitals over the railings. The crowd threw money and the students scrambled for it, tumbling about on the grass as if in a game.

That there was coolness somewhere one could see, for the flags above the stands and above the wigwams on the hill were moving a little. But the coolness did not reach to where I was.

I sat down on a white-painted bench exposed to the sun. When I attempted to rise I found I was stuck to the paint as to soft glue. The bench will need a new coat of paint and I shall need a new pair of trousers.

Still, it was worth it.

I heard a man who was at the Derby for the first time saying: "It's the greatest spectacle I have ever seen."

There is certainly nothing to beat it, if you except the Galway Races.

It is a very pleasant pandemonium—a pandemonium to the eye and to the ear. It is a prodigious holiday—so prodigious that even the really hard-working people, such as the tic-tac men with their wildly waving arms and hats, are scarcely noticeable in the vast wilderness of men and women who have come to see other men and women enjoying themselves.

It is a continent of pleasure flung on the low green hills, . . . But I told you I couldn't describe it.

THE SPORTING LIFE

I had been watching it for hours when the horses, thirty or so, came out in procession, headed by a horse-policeman, and paraded before the stands, each of them with a large number on the saddle.

First came Dry Toast, with Carslake in green sleeves. After this came Tamar, with a jockey in such pretty clothes that one would have liked to buy him as a Christmas present for a good child. His light blue jacket was such a very light blue, and his pink cap was so exquisitely pink, that he and his horse between them would have made a perfect toy. One by one the long and dazzling carnival of toys filed past us.

They were, I am told, a second-rate lot of horses for a Derby. Who, looking at them, could have admitted it? There was nothing wanting to make the scene perfect except that Captain Cuttle was not to be seen in his place in the procession.

People began to ask, "Where's Captain Cuttle?" They were soon to know. Hardly had the troop of horses been led past us, each with a man at his head, when a rider in a red cap with a gold tassel, white-clad with a black hoop—for is not his owner also the proprietor of Black and White whisky?—appeared in the distance, seated on a noble chestnut horse with a white face and a white stocking.

It was Donoghue making his entrance like a star turn. He rode his horse quietly along the railings, lonely in his genius, and cheered for his genius as he passed.

CAPTAIN CUTTLE WINS

Having made their bow to us, the horses turned and galloped back past us again on their way to the far tip of the horseshoe. The book-makers below were straining their throats in their last frantic appeal to last-minute betters.

"Twenty to one Simon Pure ! Twenty-five to one Scamp ! "

At the starting-post it was some time before the horses could be got into position. Men with field-glasses watched them greedily and made impatient comments. Then, suddenly, there was a dash and a flash of horses, and the men with the field-glasses were muttering, "Re-Echo has failed at the start," "Scamp is going it," and reading every yard of the race for us like the words of a book.

There were times when you could only see the jockeys' heads, dim as heat vibrations, above the heads of the far crowd. Then they were round the corner, and, one by one, they flashed past behind the crowd, like the flickerings of a cinematograph.

Men shouted : "Come on, Scamp !" "Tamar's got it !" "No, Captain Cuttle !" And, as the horses came round Tattenham Corner and into full view, people once more said: "Tamar !" "No, Captain Cuttle !" As they poured towards us along the straight, the shout became a scornful affirmation: "Captain Cuttle—easily, easily !"

Certainly, Donoghue's red cap seemed to leave the other horses farther and farther behind with every stride. They hung on, but they were fighting

THE SPORTING LIFE

with each other rather than with Captain Cuttle—fighting for a place. Captain Cuttle had but to decide the number of lengths he meant to win by.

He swept past the post in a triumph of cheers, while well behind him a desperate medley of horses were sweating their souls out under desperate jockeys, as though they had determined to win a place or die.

A minute later and the crowd had poured out on to the grass, and Donoghue was being protected like a king from the enthusiastic crowd by horse-policemen. His large face was all smiles under the peak of his red cap, as Lord Woolavington, tall and grey, led the horse in to be unsaddled.

His hands, however, were trembling as he undid the buckle of the reins, and Captain Cuttle, pawing the green into dust, seemed to have felt the strain of the race less than he. . . .

And that's how my dream came true.

I wonder what Freud has to say about it.

XLIV

ROYAL HUNT CUP DAY AT ASCOT

“ **T**HEY treat it like a garden-party,” I heard a youth say to the girl at his side, as the whirlpool of silk hats swirled slowly round under the blowing lime-trees in the paddock.

Ascot, indeed, became more and more like a garden-party at the end of every race, in spite of the draught that was blowing everywhere and turning the faces of the gate-keepers blue.

It was still more like a scene in a musical comedy —one of those scenes in which a large chorus of ladies and gentlemen, dressed as only actors and actresses can dress, drifts slowly in and fills the stage.

You got this effect especially on the lawn under the trees behind the stands, with scarlet bandsmen playing in the middle of a ring of flowers, and luncheon balconies and all manner of little roofed tea alcoves, coffee alcoves and refreshment tents running round the sides.

There was a small tent labelled “ Iced Cups Only ” —champagne cup, white wine cup, and all the rest of them. I did not see a man or woman brave enough to face such Arctic drinks on such an Arctic day.

If there is a fault to be found with Ascot, it is that

THE SPORTING LIFE

there is too much of it. It is, in a sense, a little world of the idle, but, unless you are in the Royal Enclosure, it is impossible to enjoy a day's racing at it without an amount of long-distance walking and climbing that would test the heart of an athlete.

For three pounds you get a badge—a brown, green, yellow and white shield—that admits you to the grand stand, Tattersalls and the paddock, and if you visit all three (as you are bound to do) in connection with every race, I reckon that by the end of the day you will have covered a distance equal to three times up and down Mount Everest.

You have, first of all, to scurry along a long white underground passage, lit with electric lights, to see the horses led round in the paddock.

You have to scurry back along the same long white underground passage to get to Tattersalls to lay your bets.

Then you have to fight your way out of Tattersalls and hurry round to the back of the stand and climb, three steps at a time, the steepest stone steps that ever existed out of a mediæval prison tower in order to get a good view of the race.

After you have done this three or four times, you cease to remember that it is a cold day. Let me warn the young and foolish, who imagine that race-going is fun, that it is the hardest of hard work. Sitting in a chair in an office is a pastime compared to it.

There is, I admit, the illusion of gaiety in the scene.

ROYAL HUNT CUP DAY

There is a charming air of white and gold about it. Even the white notice-board that gives the names of the horses and jockeys before each race is tipped with gold spikes.

The race-course itself is on a heath and is shaped like the outline of an egg drawn by a very small and very incompetent child. Behind it green woods upon green woods disappear into the distance and the mist.

Inside the egg the general public presses up against the railings—a crowd pepper-and-salt in colour compared to the silk-hatted and flower-like crowd that mingles in the stands and on the lawns.

Tipsters are at their capers among them, dressed like dismantled jockeys and in all sorts of guises. Book-makers have set up their huge umbrellas, and little flags flutter above the slate-like boards on which they chalk up the prices they are offering in accordance with the maniacal advice signalled to them by the tic-tac men, who are stationed in Tattersalls.

Here, amid the din and the crowd, are also the private refreshment marquees of various clubs, and there is a constant coming and going of silk hats and flower-like forms across the green course through the white paddock gates.

As for the paddock itself, it, of all parts of the ground, gives most the appearance of a garden-party.

Here is the rendezvous of hats and dresses of men and women who are almost as pretty as the horses they have come to see. For human beings

THE SPORTING LIFE

are, whatever may be said, exceedingly pretty creatures when they spend enough money on their clothes.

It was disappointing, perhaps, to see so many of the women wearing cloaks over the dresses that had cost them so much thought and care, but, at least, they were expensive cloaks.

But to walk among them was to feel that in a measure they were disguised—that, at the touch of a wand, they would break out from these cloudy coverings and shine forth in the splendour that only really exists in fairy tales. The sun was cloaked, and so were they.

The men were bolder. Few of them wore over-coats, and it was delightful to see them promenading under the trees in spats that were as white as the railings round the course. They were for the most part studies in black and white—black of hat and morning-coat and white of spat and button-hole.

Men and women alike wandered about the paddock, visiting this ring and that, looking in at the stalls when the horses were being got ready for the Royal Hunt Cup.

Montserrat—“or is it ‘Montserrah’?” I heard drawled out under a tall hat—Lord Lascelles’s charming brown horse, had a crowd of gapers round him, and a man poured water out of a beer-bottle on to a sponge, sponged the animal’s tongue and moistened his muzzle, his cheeks and his brows.

Round in a ring the horses were slowly walked, a

ROYAL HUNT CUP DAY

man at the head of each, and a boy sitting on the back of Stratford (of whom so much was expected), in order, I suppose, to remind him not to be excited by the weight of a human being.

As each horse passed, the name and number on its attendant's sleeve were scanned, and there were exclamations of delight when the beautiful dark bay Black Gown went by.

"Looks as if he would be all right over the fences," said a sportsman. And perhaps that would have suited him better than Ascot.

Leighton, looking compact and at ease, rather than like lightning restrained, passed amid dubious interest, and women did not exclaim, "That's my horse!" as they did when they saw Highlander or Tetrabbazia.

One horse went by, hooded like a member of a secret tribunal in sensational fiction. As it passed, a youth in a topper said to the girl at his side: "What's this one? Mother always backs something in blinkers." Mother, I fancy, lost her money this time.

As for me, I can't help admitting that I backed three horses for the Hunt Cup. I backed Crubemore because I thought he was going to win, Scamp because I had already lost money on him in the Derby, and Varzy for a reason that will appeal to anyone who realises in what a very uncertain world we live.

I had been thinking about Varzy—thinking with

THE SPORTING LIFE

that intense seriousness with which one studies the records of horses—and wondering what on earth he had ever done to make a number of people discuss him so flatteringly.

I think I should have decided that his chance of winning the Cup was small enough, if I had not looked up at the notice-board and seen beside his name the name of his jockey, Lynch. Now, on the previous day, I had had a letter through the post on the envelope of which my name was misspelled “Robert Lynch.”

“These things,” said an American lady to me about something else the other day, “are not accidents—they’re meant.”

I applied her philosophy to the situation, bolted like a rabbit through the underground tunnel, and forced my way—nay, fought my way—into Tattersalls.

I heard a book-maker offering sixteen to one against Varzy, and I had just enough breath left to close with him.

Then once more we had the procession up the stone steps, and, looking down, I saw the horses coming one by one out of the paddock for the preliminary parade before the stands.

Jockeys, in an alphabet of colours, sat in tense positions on their backs. Donoghue alone, in his violet cap and violet and primrose garb, sat like a man at ease, and seemed almost to dawdle on the admirable black Crubemore.

ROYAL HUNT CUP DAY

It was as though he had relaxed every muscle and would not waste the tightening of a single nerve till he could do it to some purpose. It may be that this conservation of energy is part of the secret of his genius.

Rain had by this time begun to fall. Men got into their overcoats, or, at the least, turned up their coat collars. The rain came like a mist on a strong wind and hid more and more of the green woods beyond the heath.

When the parade was over the horses turned, as at touch of a spur, and galloped off full tilt into the teeth of the wind and rain towards the starting-post, the jockeys well forward over their necks. Scamp, I thought, had the legs of a scamp, flung about anyhow. But Varzy—well, Varzy, as they say, took some holding. He had that splendid air of having a demon somewhere imprisoned in him that wanted to run away with his slight chestnut body.

A few men in silk hats timidly put up umbrellas, but the crowd would have none of it and the hats had to suffer.

The race for the Royal Hunt Cup is a race of a little over seven furlongs along a straight course. But you can only see the second half of it from the stands. As the horses drew near us in a swarm everybody was saying a different horse was leading.

All I could be sure of was that Donoghue in his violet cap was flinging himself forward in the wild will to overtake and pass anything that was ahead of him.

THE SPORTING LIFE

Then people said : "Varzy wins!" But a second horse was straining after Varzy, straining until at times you would have thought that at last they were neck and neck, nose in a line with nose. And, still, Donoghue's terrible energy was sweeping on behind them, and you would hardly have been surprised if Crubenmore had suddenly risen on the wings of the wind and sprung at one bound beyond both of them to the winning-post.

I can assure you it was exciting. People leaned forward in eager attitudes, as though they too were riding the loosed horses. I myself, I discovered, was crouching with arms up and mouth open.

Never for a moment did Varzy cease to be in danger. Never for a moment did he fail to bound lightly just beyond the finger-tips of danger. And gloriously though Stratford strove to outreach him it was Varzy with the white face who tore past the winning-post, a winner by a short head.

No one on the stand really knew which horse had won till the numbers went up on the board.

A few minutes later the winner had been unsaddled and a man with a voice like many megaphones marched at brisk pace round Tattersalls, bawling "Weighed in! Weighed in!" at the top of his voice, as a sign that all was well, and that the bookmakers could now pay out over the race. All the paying they had to do did not appear to make them very busy.

Then the garden-party in the paddock was

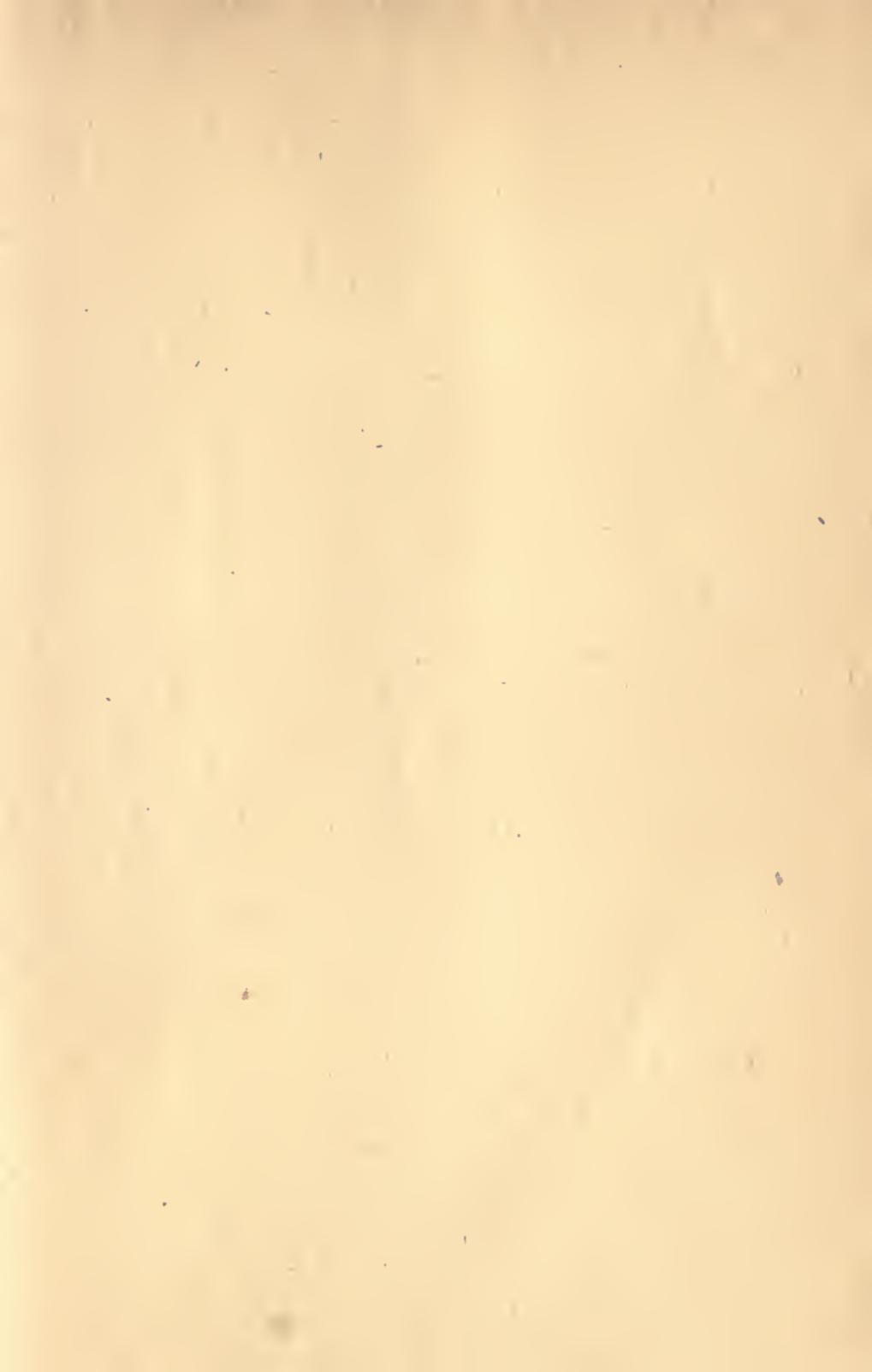
ROYAL HUNT CUP DAY

resumed, and I, for one, was feeling considerably warmer.

There was now more time to enjoy the charming spectacle of immortal spirits, dressed in the latest fashions, walking to and fro, "all under the leaves of life."

A poor Ascot, you think? Well, I had never seen it before, and, as I do not know one hat from another, and rather like rain, I enjoyed it very well.





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